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**LATINO CULTURAL VALUES AND MARITAL SATISFACTION
AMONG WOMEN OF MEXICAN ORIGIN**

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by

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, Arnoldo and Catalina,
my sisters, Roselina, Arlina, and Catalina, and most importantly
to my husband, Alex, and our future children.

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LATINO CULTURAL VALUES AND MARITAL SATISFACTION AMONG WOMEN OF MEXICAN ORIGIN

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Very little research on marital dynamics has focused on Latinos or Mexican-origin couples, although Latinos are currently the largest minority group in the United States. Furthermore, previous studies suggest women of Mexican origin experience a gradual decline in marital satisfaction over their life course, but examination of this issue has yielded inconsistent findings. The current study was conducted to investigate the influence of three specific Latino cultural values on the marital satisfaction of women of Mexican origin: *familismo* (family loyalty, unity, and obligation), *machismo* (male dominance and responsibility to provide for and protect his family), and *marianismo* (women as self-sacrificing, nurturing, and pious). The goal of this study was to examine the accompanying and shifting cultural values of the acculturation process and increase

understanding of the implications of Latino cultural values on marital satisfaction among women of Mexican origin in U.S. society.

Two hundred and fourteen married women of Mexican origin, ranging in age from 19 to 68 ($M = 37$), participated in the study. Data collection was completed online through an internet survey program. Participants completed a demographic questionnaire, the Short Acculturation Scale (Marin, Sabogal, Marin, Otero-Sabogal, & Perez-Stable, 1987), the Familism Scale (Lugo Steidel & Contreras, 2003), the Machismo Subscale of the Multiphasic Assessment of Cultural Constructs-Short Form (Cuellar, Arnold, & Gonzalez, 1995), the Latina Values Scale-Revised (Marano, 2000; revised by Melendez, 2004), the Relationship Assessment Scale (Hendrick, 1988), and a supplemental question regarding their tolerance for divorce.

Three hypotheses were proposed in terms of the three cultural values, participant acculturation level, and husband's generational status, with marital satisfaction as the criterion variable. A large percentage (71.5%) of the sample in the study was well-educated, with either a college, master's, or doctoral degree; hence, the results are reflective of highly educated, Mexican-origin women. Using hierarchical regression analyses it was found that familismo was positively correlated with marital satisfaction among women of Mexican origin. In addition, neither of the hypothesized interactions (marianismo x perceived machismo (participant's perception of her husband's endorsement of machismo) and acculturation x husband's generational status) was confirmed. Correlational and regression analyses revealed that both marianismo and perceived machismo were significantly and negatively correlated with marital

satisfaction. Clinical and research implications, limitations of the study, and directions for future research are discussed.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Research has shown happy, stable marriages are associated with longer, healthier lives (Farrell & Markides, 1985; Gottman & Silver, 1999; Karren, Hafen, Smith, & Frandsen, 2002). Alternatively, divorce and marital distress have been associated with lower levels of psychological and physical well-being (Gottman, 1993; Gottman & Silver, 1999). Yet current estimates report that approximately 50% of marriages in the United States will end in divorce or separation (Kreider & Fields, 2002). Researchers targeting this social problem have increasingly focused attention on marital satisfaction. However, little consideration has been given to this issue in the Latino¹ population, although they are currently the largest and most rapidly growing minority group in the U.S. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). According to Oropesa and Landale (2004), the shifting cultural and social conditions of the U.S. are factors contributing to the rising divorce rates among the Latino population. Approximately 11% of Latinos were divorced or separated in the year 2000, compared to 7% in the year 1990 (Marotta & Garcia, 2003, based on the 2000 U.S. Census). With people of Mexican origin² representing the largest group among Latinos, there is a clear motive to understand the mental health needs and marital functioning of this fast growing ethnic group.

¹ The terms *Latino* and *Hispanic* have been used interchangeably in past research and a great variation exists for which term people prefer, but for the purpose of this study the term *Latino* will be used to refer to persons of Latin American descent or who trace their heritage to Spanish origins. *Latino* will be used in this study even when making reference to research in which the original authors referred to the group as *Hispanic*.

² The descriptor *of Mexican origin* will be used to refer to persons of Mexican descent residing in the United States, without distinguishing immigrant status. *Of Mexican origin* will be used even when making reference to research in which the original authors referred to the group as *Mexican*, *Mexican American*, or *Chicano/a*.

During the 1970s and 1980s, research on marital satisfaction supported a “U-shaped pattern over the life course: It is high right after marriage, declines gradually until middle age, and rises during late middle age and in old age” (Markides, Roberts-Jolly, Ray, Hoppe, & Rudkin, 1999, p. 36). Markides and Hoppe (1985) investigated marital satisfaction among three generations of people of Mexican origin and discovered the presence of the U-shaped pattern among men of Mexican origin. However, in the case of women of Mexican origin, Markides and Hoppe (1985) found that instead of a U-shaped curve, there is a linear decline in levels of marital satisfaction from younger to older generations. Unfortunately, very few studies have examined marital satisfaction and functioning among Latino couples or investigated factors affecting the success or failure of their relationships (Bean & Crane, 1996; Bean, Perry, & Bedell, 2001; Flores, Tschann, Marin, & Pantoja, 2004; Vega, 1990). Understanding why the linear decline in marital satisfaction occurs for women of Mexican origin is an important question and may provide a possible point of intervention in addressing their mental health needs.

Identifying the factors that contribute to marital satisfaction is an important area of research (Gottman & Silver, 1999; Robinson & Blanton, 1993). Some of the factors most often mentioned in the literature include conjugal power, family size, education, age, socioeconomic status, communication, commitment, and religious orientation. According to Santiago-Rivera, Arredondo, and Gallardo-Cooper (2002), considering several factors such as communication styles, emotional styles, and value systems is important in the study of Latino marriage and the Latino family. Cultural values and related factors, such as gender role beliefs, have not been sufficiently examined in marital

research with Latinos despite findings frequently linking the Latino population with important cultural values (Cuellar, Arnold, & Gonzalez, 1995; Gil & Vazquez, 1996; Keefe, 1984; Sabogal, Marin, & Otero-Sabogal, 1987; Tharp, Meadow, Lennhoff, & Satterfield, 1968). As Latinos gradually integrate into U.S. society and begin to adopt mainstream values to varying degrees, their cultural value systems surrounding marriage and family concurrently shift as well.

This integration or acculturation as is often referred to in multicultural research, has been a widely studied variable and is essential for understanding the Latino population, including people of Mexican origin (De Anda, 2004; Negy & Snyder, 2000a; Rueschenberg & Buriel, 1989). Acculturation refers to the process of cultural and psychological change that occurs when two or more cultural groups come into contact (Berry, 2005). Studies of the relationship between acculturation and mental health have produced inconsistent findings between the two variables (Bean et al., 2001; Malgady & Rodriguez, 1994; Salgado De Snyder, 1987). While some imply acculturation is accompanied by an increase in psychological symptoms and problems, others indicate the existence of a curvilinear relationship between acculturation and mental health, suggesting that “a combination of elements from the culture of origin and those of the new culture lead to better mental health” (Malgady & Rodriguez, 1994, p. 55). Research on acculturation and marital relationships among couples of Mexican origin has produced equivocal findings as well. Some researchers have suggested lower levels of acculturation are related to increased marital distress (Vega, Kolody, & Valle, 1988), while other studies have found a link between lower levels of acculturation and increased marital

satisfaction (Casas & Ortiz, 1985; Flores et al., 2004; Negy & Snyder, 1997).

Understanding this acculturative process is important, particularly in a therapeutic context. Through the complex adaptive process of acculturation, many Latinos find themselves interacting and coping within two distinct cultures. As more Latinos, and in particular individuals of Mexican origin, gain access to mental health services it becomes important for therapists to understand the evolving cultural values that influence their emotional, cognitive, and marital functioning.

Closely related to acculturation are values that are believed to be integral to the Latino culture. For example, research has supported a link between acculturation, *familismo*, *machismo*, and *marianismo* (Cofresi, 2002; Cuellar et al., 1995; Gil & Vasquez, 1996). Some of these factors or traits of acculturation may even have protective influences among couples of Mexican origin. While these cultural values are not limited to the Latino culture and may be found within other populations, their presence in the Latino literature has been long-standing and they may continue to influence and shape many aspects of Latino family life and culture today. Familismo, or family unity and loyalty, is considered a central characteristic of Latino families, including those of Mexican origin. A familistic cultural orientation indicates great value is placed on the family, marriage, and fertility. Latinos have also been linked with rigid, traditional gender roles, such as machismo for men and marianismo for women. In following these rigidly delineated sex roles, men are typically responsible for protecting their family and supporting them financially, while women take care of the household tasks, including taking care of and raising the children. Men who subscribe to machismo are often

expected to exhibit aggressiveness and virility, while women who subscribe to marianismo are expected to be self-sacrificing, nurturing, and pious. The cultural constructs of familismo, machismo, and marianismo are undergoing continuous transformation in both the Latino and Mexican cultures, and Latinos in the U.S. are experiencing particular influence from the modernization of European American society. Many Latinos struggle in their acculturation to U.S. society while attempting to maintain some of the important aspects of their country of origin. Despite the evidence of the importance placed on the family system and the traditional gender roles which may continue to prescribe behavior and attitudes in many Latino and Mexican-origin families, there is a gap in the literature addressing the effects of these cultural values on marriage and marital satisfaction.

The purpose of this study is to extend the previous research examining the link between acculturation and marital satisfaction by exploring the presence and influence of Latino cultural values on marital satisfaction among women of Mexican origin. The study focuses on the cultural value system of married women of Mexican origin, including their beliefs and attitudes about gender roles, family functioning, and marital dynamics. The three Latino cultural variables investigated are familismo, machismo, and marianismo. In an attempt to address the issues of rising divorce rates and lowered marital satisfaction among women of Mexican origin, one potential contributing factor may be the accompanying and shifting cultural values of the acculturation process. Exploring culture and identifying how culture is reinforced or transformed within couples of Mexican origin in the U.S. is essential to understanding their marital functioning. The results from

this study may provide information that will help counselors and researchers become more attuned to the needs of this growing population.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

A review of the literature begins with an overview of the research on marriage and marital satisfaction. Next is a description of the Latino and Mexican-origin population, with an emphasis on the importance of family and marriage in this culture. Then, central issues regarding acculturation and culture within the Latino and Mexican-origin population are examined. This section also reviews relevant research investigating the influence of acculturation on marital satisfaction in women and couples of Mexican origin. Next, three cultural values often ascribed to the Latino population (familismo, machismo, and marianismo) are discussed in relation to acculturation and marital functioning and satisfaction among Mexican-origin women and couples. Included is an examination of the literature regarding the changes from traditional gender roles to more egalitarian influences in marriage among couples of Mexican origin, as well as the influences of these changes on marital satisfaction among women in particular. The chapter concludes with a summary of the literature review and the statement of purpose.

Marriage and Marital Satisfaction

Research on marriage began as early as the 1930's with attempts to understand why marriages dissolve (Gottman & Krokoff, 1989). More recently, identifying the factors that contribute to marital satisfaction has been a growing area in the study of marriage. However, much of the research conducted on marital satisfaction has focused on European American society, and research on the marital dynamics of Latinos is sparse.

Marital distress and divorce are issues that affect couples of all age groups, social classes, races, and ethnicities. A failed marriage often leads to economical and emotional difficulties, particularly for women and children. According to Hicks, McWey, Benson, and West (2004), marital quality appears to be steadily declining in the U.S. Recent estimates suggest married couples are more likely to end up in divorce than remain intact (Bramlett & Mosher, 2002). Gottman and Silver (1999, p. 3) report “chances of first marriages in the U.S. ending in divorce (within a 40-year period) range between 50% and 67%” and this rate increases by 10% for second marriages. Gottman (1999) suggests the first seven years and years 16 to 24 are the most critical and vulnerable time periods in a marriage. According to Gottman and Levenson (2002), the majority of divorces occur during the first seven years of marriage, as this period is often flooded with emotion and instability. Midlife, or years 16 to 24 of marriage, is another period at high risk for divorce, particularly due to teenage children in the home (Gottman & Levenson, 2002).

Currently in our society, divorce has become a familiar and easy method for escaping dissatisfaction in marriage. However, research suggests marriage can serve as a protective factor for both physical and psychological well-being. Gottman and Silver (1999) assert happily married individuals are healthier and live longer than individuals who are divorced or unhappily married. Support for this claim is provided in the book by Karren et al. (2002), which discusses current research on social support, relationships, marriage, and health. Karren et al. (2002) indicate having social ties (i.e., a spouse, close-knit family, a network of friends) contributes to longer, disease-resistant lives. They note the immune systems of happily married couples are stronger than those of divorced

people, thus decreasing their risk for all kinds of illness. “Death rates for single, divorced, and widowed individuals are significantly higher than the rates for married individuals; this holds true for coronary heart disease deaths among both men and women and for both Whites and non-Whites” (Lynch, 1977, cited in Karren et al., 2002, p. 380). Moreover, in a study examining marriage and physical health within three generations of Mexican-origin couples, Farrell and Markides (1985) found marriage, and particularly satisfying marriage, can serve as a protective factor for physical health among younger individuals of Mexican origin.

Marriage also appears to promote better mental health and protection from psychiatric illnesses (Karren et al., 2002), and this holds true as well among the Mexican-origin population (Saenz, Goudy, & Lorenz, 1989). While happy, stable marriages in general have been associated with less suicidality and being psychologically well-adjusted, a link has been found between depression and dissatisfaction within marriages (Farrell & Markides, 1985; Karren et al., 2002; Saenz et al., 1989; Vega et al., 1988). Interestingly, research has shown that women gain physical and psychological health benefits when they are in satisfying marriages, whereas men benefit solely from being married, regardless of whether the marriage is satisfying or not (Faulkner, Davey, & Davey, 2005). This finding provides further grounds for investigating factors that promote marital satisfaction, particularly among women, as this construct appears to have the potential to enhance their physical and psychological well-being.

Marital satisfaction, which has been used interchangeably with marital adjustment and marital quality, is a widely used concept in marital research (Sabatelli, 1988).

According to Sabatelli (1988), marital satisfaction normally refers to “a person’s attitudes toward the partner and the relationship, where the unit of analysis is the individual (i.e., the individual’s attitudes or feelings) and the object of the analysis is the individual’s subjective impressions (rather than objective accounts of) the relationship” (p. 894). Gagnon, Hersen, Kabacoff, and Van Hasselt (1999) and Markides et al. (1999) indicate marital satisfaction tends to be elevated right after marriage (i.e., honeymoon period), but dwindles steadily until middle age, and then typically increases as people enter older age. This is consistent with Anderson, Russell, and Schumm’s (1983) study examining the nature of the curve of marital satisfaction over the family life cycle, which also demonstrated a curvilinear, U-shaped trend for marital satisfaction among 196 married individuals in a Midwestern city. Some research on marital satisfaction suggests marital satisfaction declines during the childbearing years (Anderson et al., 1983; Bean, Curtis, & Marcum, 1977; Markides & Hoppe, 1985; Markides et al., 1999; Picker, 2005). This may be due to the greater time demands for parents, the financial strains that accompany a growing family, and less time spent together as a couple. Understanding the quality of marriage, specifically marital satisfaction, is very important in marital research for a number of reasons. Bradbury et al. (2000, p. 964) explain research on marital satisfaction is important for understanding “its effects on numerous other processes inside and outside the family,” as well as for the “benefits that accrue to society when strong marriages are formed and maintained.” Bradbury et al. (2000) also suggest research on the quality of marriage is vital for creating empirically valid interventions for couples in distress.

Some recent empirical research has focused on the factors that help protect and serve to maintain stability and happiness within a marriage. This has been accomplished, in part, by conducting research on older couples. For example, Acitelli and Antonucci (1994) explored gender differences in the link between marital support and satisfaction among older couples. Their study revealed that perceptions of social support in marriage were strongly related to marital satisfaction and general well-being, particularly for women. Wives who perceived the marriage to be supportive experienced greater marital satisfaction than husbands who perceived social support in the marriage. In another study, Carstensen, Gottman, and Levenson (1995) investigated emotional behavior in long-term marriages. The authors found humor and affection were characteristics of happily married, stable, older couples.

Gottman (1999) conducted longitudinal and experimental research on marriage by studying hundreds of couples in U.S. society over the past three decades with attempts to identify the factors that contribute to marital satisfaction. Gottman (1999) and Gottman and Silver (1999) suggest the quality of the couple's friendship, including mutual respect and understanding, is most important in determining marital satisfaction for both women and men. The authors researched what makes marriages succeed rather than what makes them fail and in doing so found that marital satisfaction can exist independent of significant differences in family values and interests among the couple. Although Gottman (1999) and Gottman and Silver (1999) provided useful information regarding protective factors in marital satisfaction, their findings were limited to European American society. Nonetheless, Gottman's extensive research on marriage provides a

starting point for exploring the rich culture and variability that exists among the Latino population and Latino marriages. Marital satisfaction in European American populations has been studied for many years. Vega (1990) and Contreras, Hendrick, and Hendrick (1996) suggest the various perspectives and research models used in the study of marriage and marital satisfaction for non-Latino populations can be used to supplement existing research and enhance the understanding of Latino families and couples. In light of the rising divorce rates among Latinos and research suggesting a decline in marital satisfaction over the life course for women of Mexican origin, there is a need for further examination of marital quality and identification of protective factors among Latino couples, and specifically among women of Mexican origin.

Latinos of Mexican Origin

The Latino population is the fastest growing pan-ethnic group in the U.S., with those of Mexican origin representing the largest ethnic group among Latinos (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). Latinos are also the youngest ethnic group in the U.S. (De Anda, 2004; Marotta & Garcia, 2003; Rothe, 2004). De Anda (2004) indicates the Mexican-origin population is growing quickly due to immigration, youthfulness of the group, and elevated fertility rates. According to Ramirez and de la Cruz (2002), Latinos represent 13.3% of the total U.S. population and 66.9% (two thirds) are of Mexican origin. Latinos, on average, live at a lower socioeconomic level than European Americans and have the lowest level of educational attainment in the U.S. (Rothenberg, 1995).

The Latino population is very diverse in terms of demographic factors such as national origin, social class, education, and level of acculturation to European American

culture. Nonetheless, many Latinos share several important customs and beliefs due to a common origin. According to Cofresi (2002), “Latinos share Spanish heritage, including preference for the Spanish language and the influence of the Catholic Church, and they maintain similar cultural values” (p. 437). The church, or *La Iglesia*, is a very important organizing principle among the Latino population. Frevert and Miranda (1998) report while many Latinos continue to practice Catholicism, a growing number of Latinos in the U.S. are practicing Protestant and indigenous religions. Although many differences exist among the various ethnic groups within the Latino population, the Latino culture has traditionally been characterized as one where family unity, respect in interpersonal relationships, and family hierarchy are highly valued. Traditional Latino culture stresses the importance of family and highly values marriage and children. Non-Latino populations may also embrace similar values, but the current study focuses on the importance and adherence of these long-established and salient values within the Latino culture.

The Family

Ramirez and de la Cruz (2002) report Latino family households tend to be larger than those of non-Latino Whites and Mexican family households are more likely than other Latino households to have five or more people. Research also indicates Latinos tend to be more family-oriented than European Americans (Vega, 1990). The family is often the most valued institution among the Latino and Mexican-origin population. The family of Mexican origin has typically been described in the literature as “extended, enmeshed, dense, and self-reliant” (Vega et al., 1988, p. 391). The term “enmeshed” has often been

used in the literature to illustrate the close-knit nature of Latino families as maladaptive or pathological. However, this close-knit quality is also considered adaptive in terms of social support. A high value is placed on social and economic support among extended family members. Santiago-Rivera et al. (2002) describe the typical Latino family as including parents, children, and very often members of the extended family, such as aunts, uncles, or grandparents. In traditional Latino families, the mother is typically the homemaker and the father is often the sole breadwinner.

The Latino literature indicates many traditional Latino families are generally patriarchal, with overt hierarchy amongst the members (Rothenberg, 1995; Santiago-Rivera et al., 2002). Santiago-Rivera et al. (2002, p. 73) maintain “because the Latino family system practices a hierarchical structure, mothers, regardless of their power within the family, may be submissive to the father and project to the children an image of being second in command.” Strict family hierarchy, however, may not be present within the entire Latino population in the U.S. due to the great variation existing in this culture, as many Latinos experience changes in cultural attitudes and behaviors associated with demands from contemporary society. It is important to note extreme diversity also exists among families of Mexican origin. Nonetheless, this hierarchy within the family is often highly reflective of the traditional gender roles by which some married couples of Mexican origin may continue to live. Machismo and marianismo are the cultural values often referred to when discussing traditional gender roles among Latinos and will be discussed further in depth later in this chapter.

Marriage

The Latino population has the highest marriage rate in the U.S. (Rothe, 2004). According to Raley, Durden, and Wildsmith (2004), Mexican culture tends to be more “pro-nuptial” and “pro-natal” than U.S. culture (p. 874). Oropesa and Landale (2004) maintain individuals of Mexican origin tend to place greater value on the importance of marriage than non-Latino Whites. People of Mexican origin living in the U.S. also tend to be married at a younger age in comparison to non-Latino White women (Raley et al., 2004). Additionally, the Latino population has the lowest divorce rate in the U.S. (Rothe, 2004; Raley et al., 2004). According to Brindis, Driscoll, Biggs, and Valderrama (2002), divorce rates are lower among Latino adults than among non-Latino Whites or African Americans in the U.S. Although couples of Mexican origin have been shown to have the lowest rates of divorce among Latino minority groups, the rates of divorce, separation, and widowing have been steadily increasing during recent years (Frisbie, 1986; Marotta & Garcia, 2003; Vega, 1990). Divorce rates among Latinos are increasing in part due to exposure to U.S. culture where divorce is a more prevalent and acceptable option (Frank & Wildsmith, 2005). In terms of intermarriage between ethnic groups, Latinos generally tend to be married to spouses who are also Latino (Oropesa & Landale, 2004). Specifically, 75% of women and men born in Mexico and living in the U.S. are married to spouses who are also born in Mexico (Oropesa & Landale, 2004). Furthermore, Latina women (65%) and Latino men (78%) born in the U.S. also tend to be married to Latino spouses (Oropesa & Landale, 2004).

Marriage in Latino and Mexican culture should be considered within the context of family. Marriage is very significant within the family of Mexican origin because it is the union of not just two individuals but two families (Frevert & Miranda, 1998), which expands family networks and support systems. Frevert and Miranda (1998) explain “the families of both spouses are expected to participate in strengthening the bond between them” and that members from their extended families are also involved in helping the couple “in all aspects of family life” (p. 297). In essence, the marriage strengthens the family system and family bonds. According to Solomon (1989), a new family system is created from two individual subsystems during marriage. Two families become unified through marriage, thus enlarging the already existing kin networks. Solomon (1989) suggests both individuals in the marriage, or the new family system, must create an arrangement that provides both comfort and respect for individual values. Family-centered values, such as familismo, are important characteristics of the Latino marriage and will be discussed further later in this chapter. Many Mexican-origin families and marriages adhere to familismo and other important and traditional cultural values to varying degrees.

Vega (1990) points out that marital disruption is increasing within the Latino population. Furthermore, dissatisfaction within marriage has been linked to psychological distress, particularly in women. A study investigating marital strain, coping factors, and depression among women of Mexican origin found marital strain contributed to their depressive symptoms (Vega et al., 1988). Moreover, Saenz et al. (1989) also revealed marital satisfaction had a significantly negative effect on depression among women of

Mexican origin, with women who were more satisfied in their relationships experiencing lower levels of depression. Traditional sex roles in marriages have also been linked to depression in women because these types of relationships usually consist of less task-sharing and less fairness in decision-making (Rosen-Grandon, Myers, & Hattie, 2004). Hence, exploring the protective and strengthening factors found within marriage and culture among women of Mexican origin is important for enhancing their marital functioning and psychological well-being.

Acculturation

Culture is a learned set of accumulated beliefs, values, attitudes, and behaviors that is passed from one generation to the next. Culture helps people define their way of life and general behavior, including their language and social relationships. Essential to understanding the Latino and Mexican-origin culture is the process of cultural adjustment, or acculturation in the U.S. According to Berry (2005), acculturation refers to the “dual process of cultural and psychological change that takes place as a result of contact between two or more cultural groups and their individual members” (p. 698). Berry explains that the individual experiences changes in behaviors and beliefs, while the individual’s group experiences changes in cultural practices and social structure. Similarly, Negy and Snyder (1997) state acculturation is the degree to which an individual subscribes to the values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors of the dominant culture.

Several factors have been associated with acculturation, including generational status, length of residence in the United States, and whether or not an individual was born

in the U.S. However, some researchers agree that language use and preference is the best and most often used index of acculturation (De Anda, 2004; Rueschenberg & Buriel, 1989). A number of research studies examining issues among the Mexican-origin population have considered language use as an important determinant of level of acculturation (Cuellar et al., 1995; Marin et al., 1987; Rueschenberg & Buriel, 1989). De Anda (2004, p. 84) maintains: “In the case of Mexican Americans and other Latinos in the United States, the degree to which one prefers and uses Spanish or English correlates highly with the degree to which one embraces the values and behaviors of the U.S. mainstream.” According to Bean et al. (2001), some Latinos are bicultural and interact with both English-speaking and Spanish-speaking groups. Nevertheless, many Latinos in the U.S. continue to hold on to the Spanish language and the Latino culture as central components of their identity.

The acculturative process has been described as either unidirectional (i.e., assimilation) or bidirectional and multidimensional, the latter indicating that a person may adopt values and beliefs of the dominant culture while maintaining aspects of and loyalty to their culture of origin to varying degrees (Berry, 2005; Contreras et al., 1996; Salgado De Snyder, 1987). Berry (2005) theorized individuals experience the adaptation process differently and thus defined four acculturation strategies: assimilation, separation, integration, and marginalization. Assimilation involves absorbing the culture of the dominant group while rejecting one’s culture of origin. Separation occurs when an individual is not interested in relating to or learning the culture of the dominant society, and only maintains their heritage culture and traditions. Integration (also known as

biculturalism) involves an interest in maintaining one's heritage and cultural identity, and at the same time seeking to become proficient and involved in the culture of the dominant group. Finally, marginalization involves the lack of interest in or loss of contact with both the heritage culture and the culture of the dominant society.

In bicultural models of acculturation, the individual functions in two cultures, identifying with the attitudes and behaviors of both their culture of origin and the new dominant culture (i.e., the American mainstream). Biculturalism may be considered the most psychologically healthy and adaptive in that the individual can become proficient, maintain flexibility, and operate successfully in the two cultures. Coatsworth, Maldonado-Molina, Pantin, and Szapocznik (2005) found biculturalism to be the most adaptive pattern of functioning when investigating acculturation strategies among a sample of Latino adolescents. Malgady and Rodriguez (1994) also indicate the combination of new and old cultural practices and values may lead to better mental health. One possible reason for improved mental health may be that the individual develops a healthy sense of balance and belonging by maintaining a connection to their heritage, as well as adopting some of the adaptive characteristics of the mainstream culture. In this way the individual is prepared to respond to a variety of situations by being flexible in using their new cultural system in their daily functioning. Gil and Vazquez (1996) explain Latinas in the U.S. often persevere to function successfully in both cultures by integrating their culture of origin and the dominant culture.

Functioning in two different cultures may also create internal conflict and psychological distress for individuals when certain values from their country of origin

clash with demands from the dominant society. For instance, strong family value systems and early socialization during childhood help shape the beliefs and behaviors of many Latinos. Maintaining such strong loyalty to family values and family unity in the Latino culture may be in conflict with some beliefs of the dominant European American culture, where independence and autonomy are generally highly valued. Acculturation and the accompanying new cultural behaviors and systems have been associated with lowered self-esteem and increased psychological symptoms among Latinos (Bean et al., 2001; Malgady & Rodriguez, 1994; Salgado De Snyder, 1987). Gil and Vazquez (1996) note the importance of the role of acculturation in the psychological health of Latinas. According to these authors, Latinas may experience psychological distress, such as depression and anxiety, during the process of acculturation because of their differing values from the dominant culture. Specifically, sex role socialization within the Latino culture may create difficulty for Latinas to function within the expectations of mainstream society where the roles of women are undergoing dramatic and constant transformation. One study (Salgado De Snyder, 1987) investigating ethnic loyalty among Mexican immigrant women found immigrant women of Mexican origin who were less acculturated and remained strongly attached to their Mexican culture experienced lower levels of self-esteem and satisfaction when compared to women who maintained less loyalty to their Mexican culture. According to the authors, the increased risk for psychological distress among the less acculturated immigrant women may have been due to a lack of proper coping skills for dealing with their new environment.

Many Latinas today, including women of Mexican origin, find it challenging to acculturate into U.S. society while attempting to maintain some important aspects of their heritage. Latinas who are less acculturated may hold on to some of the values and attitudes associated with traditional Latino culture, such as a greater sense of obligation to her family, less focus on individual achievement, and a display of more submissive and passive behaviors. Alternatively, Latinas who are highly acculturated may adopt some values and beliefs similar to the mainstream American culture, such as assertiveness, self-sufficiency, and independence. These differing belief systems may produce internal, familial, and environmental struggles for Latinas as they strive to function in both cultures. Acculturation can create challenges for Latinas as it is often accompanied by individual intergenerational expectations that carry a potential to create conflicts within families.

Santiago-Rivera et al. (2002) assert “because culture is a constantly changing process, Latino families need to be understood in the context of the acculturation process, migration experience, language, race, nationality, and socioeconomic background” (p. 69). The exposure to a new cultural system can be very complex. Acculturation may influence the extent to which Latinos adhere to certain cultural values and attitudes. For example, a more traditional, low acculturated, Latino family may be patriarchal in nature, where the father works full-time and the mother’s primary role is to take care of the children and the house. A less traditional and more acculturated Latino family may exhibit more egalitarian roles and shared decision-making in the family. Negy & Snyder (2000a) explain that over time, many Latinos and individuals of Mexican origin living in

the U.S. begin to adopt characteristics and beliefs which are similar to those of European Americans. This is true particularly if they have moved to the U.S. at an early age (Santiago-Rivera et al., 2002) or for those whose families have lived in the U.S. for many generations. In a literature review of Latino families in the 1980s, Vega (1990) stresses that changes in cultural values and ethnic identification associated with acculturation differ across generations. Cuellar, Nyberg, Maldonado, and Roberts (1997) investigated ethnic identity and acculturation among a sample of young adults of Mexican origin and found acculturation is highly correlated with generation, whereby individuals representing later generations were more acculturated than first (i.e., immigrants) or second generations. Their findings also suggested higher levels of acculturation into the U.S. mainstream culture among individuals of Mexican origin were accompanied by a diminished sense of ethnic group membership. In summary, acculturation as a multidimensional process involves acquiring new values and behaviors that can lead to family and relational conflicts, especially between less and more acculturated family members.

Acculturation and Marital Satisfaction

Research has indicated that acculturation is an important factor to include when examining Latino couples and families (De Anda, 2004; Negy & Snyder, 2000a) and especially when investigating marital satisfaction among couples of Mexican origin (Contreras et al., 1996). For instance, acculturation may create conflict within family and marital dynamics due to the disturbance of traditional family hierarchies and by the increasing changes in the practice of cultural traditions. The increasing divorce rates and

changes in the marital functioning of couples of Mexican origin may be due to a variety of sociocultural factors, including levels of acculturation, influences from the dominant culture, changing gender role attitudes and beliefs, increasing family sizes, and socioeconomic status. The acculturation process, in particular, and its influence on gender roles and cultural practices and values is an important cause for marital strain and conflict in intimate relationships (Casas & Ortiz, 1985; Flores et al., 2004; Santiago-Rivera et al., 2002, Vega et al, 1988).

Individuals experience the acculturation process at different levels. Therefore, married Mexican-origin men and women may adhere to traditional values and new norms from the mainstream society to differing extents. Flores et al. (2004) maintains “interpersonal conflicts may occur as a result of differential acculturation among individuals or changes in family structure and gender roles that are caused by the acculturation process” (p. 40). The authors suggest the process of adhering to traditional values from one’s culture of origin as well as adopting new values from the dominant culture may create significant sources of conflict within a marriage. Understanding individual adaptation to cultural change is essential in examining the effects of acculturation on marital relationships among Mexican origin couples (Flores et al., 2004).

In an early study examining acculturation and marriage roles among Mexican-origin wives, Tharp et al. (1968) found less acculturated women (Spanish-speaking group) placed less value on the importance of a close, intimate, sexual relationship with their husband compared to more acculturated women (English-speaking group). Less acculturated women also believed that sexual fidelity after marriage was less important

for men. The authors found that higher acculturated women assumed more egalitarian roles in their marital relationship. Although this early study demonstrated more exaggerated views of the roles of Mexican-origin women, it propelled further research in the study of acculturation and shifting marital values among Mexican-origin populations.

In a later study, Vega et al. (1988) investigated marital strain and depression among a sample of women of Mexican origin. The authors found lower levels of acculturation were related to increased marital distress among immigrant women of Mexican origin. According to Vega et al. (1988), their marginalization (i.e., no interest in maintaining one's cultural heritage or acquiring proficiency in the new dominant culture) possibly renders them less capable of managing their external environment which can lead to personal isolation and alienation. The authors reported marginal acculturation among the Mexican-origin women was associated with lowered self-esteem, increased self-denigration, and a reduced likelihood of using negotiation as a coping strategy during their marital interactions (Vega et al., 1988). Vega et al. (1988) also indicated these women were low-income housewives and were more likely to experience marital strain due to their husband's nonreciprocity (i.e., not giving in to wife's wishes and insisting to have his own way in most matters). The findings from this study demonstrated a link between low acculturation and the potential negative effects on marital functioning among women of Mexican origin. However, the study neglected to address the possible underlying cultural issues surrounding the husbands' nonreciprocity and the wives' decreased use of negotiation in their relationship which contributed to the increased strain in their marriage.

Other studies investigating the effects of acculturation among Mexican-origin couples have produced different results. In a study exploring acculturation and marital satisfaction among couples of Mexican origin, Negy and Snyder (1997) compared the marriages of 75 Mexican-origin and 66 non-Latino White couples using the Marital Satisfaction Inventory-Revised (Snyder, 1997). The authors found relatively higher levels of marital distress among the Mexican-origin sample. When examining the role of acculturation among the Mexican origin sample, Negy & Snyder (1997) found that for men of Mexican origin, level of acculturation did not affect their level of distress in their marriage. In contrast, they found a modest relationship between higher levels of acculturation and higher levels of marital distress among women of Mexican origin. Women of Mexican origin with higher levels of acculturation demonstrated greater self-disclosure by expressing more marital distress than women who were less acculturated. Negy & Snyder (1997) suggest their results may be a reflection of the increased stress associated with the pressures of redefining marital roles and expectations among traditional Mexican-origin couples moving toward contemporary standards. The authors found more acculturated women were particularly distressed over issues related to their sexual relationship and the limited amount of time shared in leisure activity with their husbands. In today's society, traditional gender and marital roles among the Mexican-origin population are shifting, in part due to influences from U.S. culture. Adherence to strict, traditional gender roles and beliefs may vary depending on the individual's level of acculturation and identification with their culture of origin.

Casas and Ortiz (1985) found an association between lower levels of acculturation and higher marital satisfaction in a study comparing Mexican born and U.S. born couples of Mexican origin. Specifically, the authors found that marital satisfaction was higher for couples in which both wife and husband were born in Mexico as opposed to couples in which at least one partner was born in the U.S. With similar findings to Negy & Snyder's (1997) study, Casas and Ortiz (1985) suggested higher levels of acculturation were related to increased marital distress due to the "stressors inherent in the redefining of traditional husband/wife roles," whereas less acculturated couples may be defined by clearer marital roles (p. 1027). An interesting characteristic distinguishing the two groups studied in this investigation was the difference in levels of education. With regard to education, Casas and Ortiz (1985) reported a mean of 4.5 years of schooling for Mexican-born husbands, 6.5 years for Mexican-born wives, 11.6 years for U.S.-born husbands, and 10.9 years for U.S.-born wives. These differences in levels of educational attainment may have moderated the relationship found between acculturation and marital satisfaction. The less acculturated and less educated Mexican-born couples may have been less willing to express their problems in their marriage due to traditional cultural norms, unlike the U.S. born couples who may place greater value on the benefits of communication and the expression of their feelings. Negy and Snyder's (1997) study also revealed greater self-disclosure among the more acculturated women of Mexican origin when compared to those who were less acculturated.

Acculturation is often accompanied by higher educational achievement. In a study exploring marital instability across three subgroups of Latinos, Frisbie (1986) found an

inverse relationship between marital stability and educational attainment among couples of Mexican origin. Frisbie (1986) suggested marital stability decreases as people of Mexican origin attain higher levels of education and subsequent higher levels of acculturation. According to Frisbie (1986), as people of Mexican origin become more acculturated, they tend to adopt customs and beliefs of U.S. society, “including a diminished reluctance to dissolve marriage” (p. 102). From these results and the two previous studies discussed, one could speculate that acculturation may be considered a risk factor in relation to marital stability. The findings from Frisbie’s (1986) study are consistent with other views that acculturation may be accompanied by greater stress and lower levels of marital satisfaction.

In a study exploring the relationship between acculturation and marital conflict among couples of Mexican origin, Flores et al. (2004) found acculturation was related to certain aspects of marital conflict, including avoidance and direct expression of feelings. Acculturated Mexican-origin husbands and wives were more expressive of their feelings during conflict, as opposed to less acculturated couples who tended to report less marital conflict in general. Flores et al. (2004) suggested “more acculturated couples are less tied to Mexican cultural scripts restricting open and direct expressions of their feelings, allowing them to express themselves during a conflict” (p. 48). They argue, however, that some traditional expectations still remain among acculturated Mexican-origin couples, particularly with regard to the husband’s role as head of the household. This is consistent with Tharp et al.’s (1968) study which found that less acculturated Mexican-origin women believe more strongly in their husband’s role as the “boss” compared to more

acculturated Mexican-origin women. Saenz et al.'s (1989) study of depression among married women of Mexican origin also revealed that wives tend to perceive their husbands as being more dominant and having more power in decision-making. Findings from Flores et al.'s (2004) study suggest that although less acculturated couples reported less marital conflict, they may be more prone to avoiding each other or expressing their difficulties indirectly, thus leading to less perceived problems in their marriage. Although Flores et al.'s (2004) study provided useful information regarding the effects of acculturation on marital functioning among couples of Mexican origin, the researchers did not measure specific changes in cultural values or gender role expectations. Measuring specific cultural values and beliefs among Mexican-origin wives and husbands regarding U.S. and Latino traditions would have provided greater insight into the marital dynamics among this population.

Although the findings regarding the relationship between acculturation and marital satisfaction are somewhat inconsistent, these acculturation studies add to the existing evidence of lowered marital satisfaction among women of Mexican origin. However, despite the above supporting evidence for the relationship between acculturation and marital satisfaction in Latino and Mexican-origin populations, an important question remains: what exactly happens to certain Latino cultural values during acculturation and how do they influence marital satisfaction? Elements of the relationship between acculturation and marital satisfaction still remain unclear. No empirical study to date has investigated this important process. As evidenced by the scarcity of marital research involving Latinos, the complexity of the acculturation process and its role within

the Latino culture and direct influence on marital functioning is difficult to assess.

Exploring the cultural variables that may prescribe behaviors and beliefs among people of Mexican origin may provide additional information to fill this gap in the literature.

Latino Cultural Values

The Latino culture has been traditionally characterized by several important values and norms. Three important cultural values often linked to the Latino and Mexican culture are *familismo*, *machismo*, and *marianismo*. These cultural variables are not exclusive to the Latino culture, but for the purposes of the current study, they will be discussed as they pertain to the lives of Latinos and particularly to individuals and couples of Mexican origin. The extent to which Latinos subscribe to these cultural values and traditional gender roles varies greatly, in part due to societal and environmental changes. These values are undergoing constant transformation, particularly in the U.S. Research suggests that an increase in acculturation level is often accompanied by a decreased endorsement of these cultural values (Cuellar et al., 1995). However, some studies have also found that some aspects of familismo and the family system remain intact despite changing levels of acculturation (Sabogal et al., 1987; Rueschenberg & Buriel, 1989). Familismo, machismo, and marianismo are important cultural values to consider when examining marital functioning and marital satisfaction among the Mexican-origin population.

Familismo

In examining Mexican origin marriages, it is important to consider the couple within the context of the family. The Mexican origin family is an extended family, unlike

the traditional U.S. nuclear family (Keefe, 1984; Rothenberg, 1995). *Familismo*, or familism, is considered a core value of the Latino and Mexican culture and represents family unity and loyalty (Sabogal et al., 1987). Although familismo exists within many other cultures, Vega (1990) points out familismo is a trait more often found among Latino families than non-Latino families. Furthermore, Brice (2002) suggests even highly acculturated Latinos maintain more familistic beliefs and attitudes than European Americans. Individuals of Mexican origin and Latinos in general tend to have a preference for maintaining a close connection to their family. Central to familismo is the value placed on close relationships and the support and interdependence among family members (Santiago-Rivera et al., 2002). *Personalismo*, another cultural value closely related to familismo, refers to the importance of being genuine and practicing personal warmth in relationships, particularly with both nuclear and extended family members (Santiago-Rivera et al., 2002). Familismo is characterized by “a strong identification and attachment of individuals with their families (nuclear and extended), and strong feelings of loyalty, reciprocity and solidarity among members of the same family” (Sabogal et al., 1987, p. 398). Keefe (1984) explains many individuals of Mexican origin value having large, local extended networks and frequently seek out face-to-face interactions with their kin ties. Familismo stems from a collectivist worldview and “is manifested in a shared sense of responsibility to care for children, provide financial and emotional support, and participate in decision-making efforts that involve one or more members of the family” (Santiago-Rivera et al., 2002, p.43). A great sense of obligation exists among family

members. Reflected in familismo, there is greater emphasis on the importance of the family and less emphasis on the importance of the individual (Cuellar et al., 1995).

Bean et al. (2001) examined current literature regarding family therapy with the Latino population and gleaned from the existing research that family therapy is ideal for working with people of Mexican origin. The authors indicate family therapy allows for the exploration and validation of familismo within the Latino culture. Bean et al. (2001) indicate the high value placed on extended family within Mexican-origin families can be respected in family therapy and that important extended family members can be possibly included in therapy. Many times other family members, including parents, aunts, uncles, and cousins, live with married couples and share important roles in household decision-making and participate in the raising of children. Exploring the influence and impact of these extended family members on the marital functioning of a couple would be an important factor to consider in marital therapy. Another important concept that can be explored in marital therapy is the influence of the family of origin. Gender-related socialization in Latino and Mexican origin families typically occurs from the moment a child is born and is particularly emphasized during adolescence (Peñalosa, 1968). Some Latino cultural values, such as familismo, and traditional gender role attitudes may be passed down from generation to generation and reinforced through one's family of origin. Machismo and marianismo are traditional gender role values often associated with the Latino culture that may be reinforced through the generations among Mexican-origin populations.

Many Latinos of Mexican origin who adhere to familismo maintain the importance of connectedness with family. They may “define their lifestyle based on connections with others, inside and outside the family” (Frevert & Miranda, 1998). Family Systems Theory is useful for understanding familismo among Mexican-origin families and marriages. From this perspective, the family is more than the sum of the individuals within it (Hecker & Wetchler, 2003). The family is viewed as one unit or system (Sharf, 2000). Family Systems Theory also suggests members of the family all influence the responses and actions of the other members. Furthermore, family members are dependent upon one another. The cultural value of familismo emphasizes dependency and reliance upon family unity and upon others. It requires that the family be placed ahead of individual interests.

Familismo has also been described as a commitment to provide “an emotional support system for individual family members” (Cuellar et al., 1995, p. 341). Rothenberg (1995) maintains the family system can serve as a significant source of social support, particularly when individuals are faced with poverty and minority status. *Confianza*, or the development of trust and interpersonal comfort, is also an important characteristic of familismo. Segura and Pierce (1993) stress *confianza* among kin networks ensures cultural survival. Some research suggests the emotional support system provided through familismo contributes to a better mental health status among Latinos compared with other ethnic or racial groups (Frisbie, 1986; Keefe, Padilla, & Carlos, 1978; Keefe, Padilla, & Carlos, 1979). For example, having an extended family system has been linked to the psychological well-being of individuals of Mexican origin by Keefe et al. (1979) in a

study comparing the kinship structure of people of Mexican origin and European Americans. In another study exploring emotional support systems among people of Mexican origin and European Americans, Keefe et al. (1978) found people of Mexican origin tend to rely most often on relatives for emotional support when confronted with life stressors and emotional problems, as compared to European Americans who prefer to go to a friend or family doctor.

Familismo and Acculturation

Previous research has characterized families of Mexican origin as more male-dominated and where children are highly valued, asserting that these qualities indicate they are more familistic than European American families (Bean et al., 1977). However, more recent research on acculturation has pointed out that as Latinos become more acculturated into the U.S. culture, some of the beliefs and behaviors associated with familismo may begin to fade (Cuellar et al., 1995; Sabogal et al., 1987). Through an investigation of the effects of acculturation on attitudinal familismo in a sample of 452 Latinos and 227 non-Latino Whites, Sabogal et al. (1987) provided further evidence familismo is a core characteristic of the Latino culture. The authors uncovered three basic dimensions of familismo: familial obligations, perceived support from the family, and family as referents. According to Sabogal et al. (1987, p. 401), familial obligations refers to the “obligation to provide material and emotional support to the members of the extended family,” perceived support from the family refers to the “perception of family members as reliable providers of help and support to solve problems,” and family as referents refers to relatives serving as “behavioral and attitudinal referents.” In their

study, Sabogal et al. (1987) found that despite changes in acculturation, perceived support from the family remains the most important dimension of familismo among Latinos. However, their study also found that familial obligations and the perception of family as referents do diminish with concurrent levels of acculturation. Nonetheless, Sabogal et al. (1987) point out that familial obligations and the perception of family as referents tend to persist in greater amounts among even highly-acculturated Latinos in comparison to non-Latino Whites.

In another study, Rueschenberg and Buriel (1989) investigated the relationship of acculturation to family functioning among 45 husband-wife couples of Mexican origin representing three different levels of acculturation (Unacculturated, Moderately Acculturated, and Acculturated). The authors found that for families of Mexican origin, levels of involvement in U.S. social systems and institutions increase as their levels of acculturation increases. Interestingly, Rueschenberg and Buriel (1989) also found as acculturation increases, the internal family system remains fairly unchanged, indicating that the family structure and the relationships between family members remain unchanged. Their research suggests “adjustment to U.S. society can take place with the basic integrity of the family remaining intact” (Rueschenberg & Buriel, 1989, p. 242). The findings from these two important studies indicate that although some elements of familismo might be weakened through the acculturation process, the cultural value toward family unity remains strong despite increasing levels of acculturation.

Some of the weakened aspects and changes that occur to levels of familismo among more highly acculturated Latinos may be due to the adherence of more

individualistic norms and values of the U.S. mainstream culture, which clearly contradict the collectivistic nature of traditional Latino culture. Acculturated individuals may view independence as more adaptive and necessary for daily functioning and success within U.S. culture, where work, money, and individual achievement are considered important values. Placing emphasis on personal goals may then take precedence over obligations to the family or family-related goals. As discussed earlier, many Latinas struggle to maintain flexibility and a sense of balance between their culture of origin and the U.S. society. Women of Mexican origin living in the U.S. may leave behind some aspects of their familistic orientation in pursuit of success in the dominant culture during the process of acculturation. However, diminished family bonds or conflicts about family-related values may in turn lead women of Mexican origin to vulnerability to psychological distress and marital distress.

Familismo and Marital Satisfaction

Very few studies have explored the relationships of couples of Mexican origin (Bean & Crane, 1996; Bean et al., 2001; Flores et al., 2004), and not many have explored the specific effects of cultural values on marital satisfaction and marital functioning. Further, findings have been somewhat inconsistent in the research involving familismo and marital satisfaction. In an early study involving familistic factors, Bean et al. (1977) examined the effects of family size, wife's labor force, and conjugal power on marital satisfaction among couples of Mexican origin. The authors determined familismo did not make a significant impact on marital satisfaction. Instead, they found that having fewer children and an egalitarian conjugal power structure led to greater satisfaction with the

affective side of marriage for both Mexican-origin husbands and wives. Husbands were also found to experience lower marital satisfaction when their wives worked, but were less dissatisfied if the reasons for her employment were due to necessity. Both husbands and wives experienced the greatest levels of marital satisfaction when the wife did not work. Bean et al. (1977) argued their results indicate that class or marital conditions, such as the wife's employment, are more important factors affecting marital satisfaction than ethnicity or cultural values, such as having strong family networks. Within a Mexican-origin household, a wife's employment may provide greater financial stability for the family, but at the same time may be contributing to feelings of dissatisfaction in the marriage among both partners. Although Bean et al. (1977) concluded marital conditions were more important, more current research indicates cultural factors such as familismo do make an impact on the marital functioning of some couples of Mexican origin.

The Latino literature suggests family support helps keep the Latino divorce rate down (Frisbie, 1986; Nogales, 1998). Frisbie (1986) investigated patterns of marital instability among Latinos, including participants of Mexican, Cuban, and Puerto-Rican heritage, as well as among European Americans and African Americans. The study revealed women of Mexican origin, followed by those of Cuban origin, had higher levels of marital stability when compared to the other groups. Frisbie (1986) suggested the traditional, familistic orientation found among Latinas, including those of Mexican and Cuban origin, may have been a contributing factor to their marital stability.

Santiago-Rivera et al. (2002) also suggest marital satisfaction among Latinos is enhanced by strong family values and the divorce rates among this population are lower

due to adherence to these cultural values. Family is a priority for many Latinos. One could predict couples of Mexican origin who are experiencing conflict in their relationship may look first to their family for help, based on the findings by Keefe et al. (1978) indicating people of Mexican origin tend to rely on their family for emotional support when faced with life stressors. As a source of social support, familismo can provide a sense of belonging and connection to others. Additionally, familismo has been considered a protective mechanism for Latinos, particularly when dealing with harmful influences in the environment such as discrimination and racism. Latinos often rely on their families as sources of emotional and social support. Couples of Mexican origin who endorse beliefs of familismo may also be more likely to rely on their families as sources of support during difficult periods in their marriage. Some believe maintaining a strong attachment and identification to nuclear and extended family members can be very beneficial to Latinas in particular (Keefe et al, 1979; Santiago-Rivera et al., 2002). For example, women of Mexican origin who value familismo highly may be more likely to live in households which include extended family members, thus creating more opportunity for a stronger and larger emotional support system. The close-knit quality of the Latino family offers support and comfort to Latina family members during times of stress. Familismo may serve as a buffer or protective factor during times of marital distress and may help enhance marital satisfaction among women of Mexican origin.

Negy and Snyder (1997) argue “the role of acculturation in marital relationships is a complex one, depending on such factors as relative expectations of the two partners and acculturation levels within their extended family as well as immediate social support

system” (p. 419). The Mexican-origin culture has been generally described as familistic, placing great value on the needs of the collective rather than on personal or individual needs (Bean et al., 1977). Members within the Mexican-origin family often help and support each other, and may otherwise find it difficult to survive outside the protection of the family. Therefore, it appears a married couple, as members of an extended family and altogether as one family system or unit, has better chances of survival in the midst of marital difficulties. The Mexican-origin family as a unit has more viability. Differences in the adherence of familismo would, therefore, influence marital satisfaction among couples of Mexican origin. According to Sabogal et al. (1987), familial obligations and the perception of family as referents diminish with concurrent levels of acculturation. If spouses are similar in their levels of familismo, this can lead to greater marital satisfaction due to the supportive nature of this cultural value. However, if spouses differ in levels of familismo due to varying levels of acculturation, such as differing in their views of adherence to familial obligations, then marital satisfaction may possibly decrease.

Religion

Religion is an important facet in the lives of many Latino families and couples and an important factor to consider when discussing familismo. Individuals and families often look to and rely on their faith and religious community when faced with distress. Therefore, religion and spirituality, through the church or *La Iglesia*, can be sources of support and resilience. Frevert and Miranda (1998) report the Protestant religion is increasing among Latinos, but Catholicism remains the most practiced religion among

this population. The Catholic religion as a family-related value has helped keep marriages together and the divorce rates lower among Latinos (Santiago-Rivera et al., 2002). The Catholic Church presses married couples to make a lifelong commitment to each other, thus lowering the divorce rates among Latinos in the U.S. Robinson and Blanton (1993) found personal commitment and religious orientations were important strengths in enduring marriages. According to Robinson and Blanton (1993), commitment refers to the belief and expectation that the marriage will last and that divorce is not an option. As previously stated, many Latinos are Catholic and religion plays a central role in their lives (Frevert & Miranda, 1998; Rothenberg, 1995). Religious orientation, therefore, contributes greatly to their commitment to stay married. Long-term commitment may be helpful, but at times it may also enforce the suppression of emotions during conflict, particularly in women, for the sake of the marriage. In addition to familismo and religion, certain gender role beliefs and attitudes are also likely to play an important role in the marital functioning of Latino couples.

Gender Role Values

The existing literature on the Latino population often refers to clearly defined gender roles when describing the behaviors and beliefs of Latino men and women. Researchers have largely focused on the cultural values and traditions that have contributed to the oppression of Latinas within their own ethnic groups and the U.S. society. Specifically, much of the literature suggests that the roles of Latinas and Mexican-origin women have been primarily shaped by cultural traditions encouraging submissiveness and passivity, particularly in relation to men. Latinas are often depicted

as being restricted by these rigidly delineated sex-roles. Two gender socialization concepts commonly associated with the Latino population are marianismo and machismo. Marianismo prescribes appropriate role behavior for Latinas, such as chastity, submissiveness, and devotion to the home. Machismo includes male dominance and aggressiveness, which are some of the most commonly known negative aspects. These traditional gender role beliefs and attitudes specific to the Latino culture appear to be somewhat stereotyped in much of the past and recent literature (Andrade, 1982; Niemann, 2001; Rothenberg, 1995), as these extreme views are shifting with the modernization of U.S. and Latino societies. Nonetheless, although many of these traditional perspectives of gender roles may not be as evident or pervasive as they once may have been or as were once believed, traditional gender role values may still influence the behavior and relationship dynamics of some men and women of Mexican origin. For instance, these values may in fact influence aggressiveness among men and sexual submissiveness among women, which may in turn create marital conflict and hinder positive marital interactions.

The following descriptions of the cultural values of machismo and marianismo are summaries of what has been reflected in much of the Latino literature. It is important to be aware that although these values are often associated with the Latino culture, they are not limited to the Latino population and may be found within other cultures as well, just as familismo is not unique to the Mexican culture. Also, these cultural values may not be entirely reflective of today's Latino culture and norms. They may vary in manner

and degree due to many factors, including levels of acculturation, education, SES, generational status, and social class.

Machismo

In traditional Mexican culture, masculine dominance has been frequently described as a central facet of the family (Tharp et al., 1968). Early Latino literature (Peñalosa, 1968) explains strongly held, traditional beliefs of man's biological, intellectual and social superiority to the woman have shaped male-female relations among people of Mexican origin. *Machismo* refers to a "socially learned and reinforced set of behaviors in Latino society which men are expected to follow" (Gil & Vazquez, 1996, p. 7). For Latinos, the term machismo originally referred to a man's honor, bravery, and responsibility to provide for and protect his family (Rothenberg, 1995; Santiago-Rivera et al., 2002). Protecting women, such as mothers and sisters, was of utmost importance. The cultural definition of machismo has been transformed to also represent man's sexist, arrogant, sexually aggressive, and chauvinistic behaviors. These negative aspects of machismo have received much more focus in both the U.S. and Latino societies than the original characteristics of honor and leadership (Rothenberg, 1995).

Gil and Vazquez (1996) explain machismo has a "light side," or positive characteristics: "the light side of machismo is personified in the *caballero*, who is a true protector in every sense of the word" (p. 5). According to Gil and Vazquez (1996), *el caballero* protects and deifies his wife, protects his family, opens doors for women, and assumes the heavy chores in the house. Machismo typically stresses leadership and the man's role as head of the household. Men in families of Mexican origin typically take on

the role of protector, as well as one who demonstrates great competence and authority (Rothenberg, 1995; Santiago-Rivera et al., 2002).

As mentioned above, the “dark side” of machismo is the side most often referred to both within and outside the Latino community. This side of machismo often entails overt expressions of masculinity, strength, and aggressiveness. Machismo is also typically associated with hypersexuality. In being truly macho, married men may be expected to have a mistress in addition to their wife. Engaging in several amorous conquests serves the purpose of protecting and defending his male virility. Women, therefore, might become sexual objects to be conquered. Men are commonly expected to be independent and to be sexually virile: “sexual gallivanting is encouraged in men and, when promiscuous, is excused” (Cofresi, 2002, p. 439). These negative characteristics of machismo may be harmful to relationships and to the emotional development of both men and women. According to Gil and Vazquez (1996), machismo can negatively impact intimate relationships because women are often expected to endure the negative aspects of machismo.

Cuellar et al. (1995a) argue machismo is often misunderstood by mental health professionals and is an important cultural characteristic to consider for understanding identity and gender role development in Latinos. According to Cuellar et al. (1995a, p. 340), “the term ‘macho’ is often used to describe Latino males, and when a negative connotation is given to the term, a negative stereotype can result, which in turn influences the interaction between members of a host culture and the Latino minority.” In a study examining acculturation and five cultural constructs (familismo, machismo, fatalism,

personalismo, and folk beliefs) among a sample of mostly Mexican-origin participants, Cuellar et al. (1995a) found machismo to be negatively correlated with acculturation, indicating lower levels of acculturation are related to higher levels of machismo. These findings reveal adherence to machismo among the Mexican-origin population is undergoing transformation, and this cultural construct may be fading with increasing levels of acculturation.

In a more recent study, Torres, Solberg, and Carlstrom (2002) explored the cultural variable of machismo in the U.S. using a sample of 148 Latino men who were primarily of Mexican and Puerto Rican origins. The results from Torres et al.'s (2002) study extended previous research exploring the multidimensional elements of machismo among Latino men. The study also examined the existence of a continuum of positive to negative aspects of behavior associated with the Latino male gender role. The results from their study indicated traditional characteristics often associated with machismo, such as men being emotionally restrictive, controlling, and authoritarian, were only present in approximately 10% of their sample. The authors suggested "as Latinos improve their socioeconomic status, some Latino men will modify their traditional, culturally delineated gender roles" (Torres et al., 2002, p. 164). Torres et al.'s (2002) investigation provides further support for the dwindling presence of machismo among Latinos in the U.S. as a result of acculturation. Latino men who are more acculturated are likely adopting different and more contemporary views of the male gender role. Although this study provided greater understanding of the cultural construct of machismo among Latinos, it failed to provide insight regarding the Latina perspective on machismo.

Examining a woman's perspective on machismo may provide greater insight regarding the effect of this traditional cultural variable on her internal experiences and interpersonal interactions. The authors suggest further studies on Latinos in the U.S. should examine the relationship between machismo and marianismo. Marianismo is often thought of as the complement of machismo in the Latino culture, informing the passive and submissive behaviors exhibited among some women of Mexican origin.

Marianismo

In the Latino culture, the ideal role of a woman is traditionally defined by the cultural value of *marianismo* (Gil & Vazquez, 1996). Marianismo, a woman's religious association to the Virgin Mary (the mother of Christ), has been a long-standing characteristic associated with the Latino population. In some traditional family households, Latinas grow up honoring the model of the Virgin Mary, exhibiting piety, purity, long-suffering, and nurturance (Santiago-Rivera et al., 2002). The ideal of womanhood is to reflect purity and asexuality. Women are often perceived as both spiritually and morally superior to men. In essence, they are seen as nearly semi-divine: "mothers are viewed as selfless, self-sacrificing, and nurturing individuals who provide spiritual strength to family members" (Santiago-Rivera et al., 2002, p. 50). Latinas who subscribe to marianismo, in their reflection of the Virgin Mary and because of their supposed spiritual superiority to men, are expected to endure suffering and abuse, including that which is inflicted by the men in their lives. They are expected to accept their husband's "dark" behaviors associated with machismo. The Latina woman is the "good" woman, in that she is a dutiful wife and good mother. Although she is aware of

her husband's extramarital affairs, she puts up with it and suffers, thus identifying with the Virgin Mary.

Cofresi (2002) suggests marianismo among Latinas today depends on various factors such as social class and level of acculturation. She indicates Latinas who have been raised in the U.S. "may uphold aspects of traditional values but also struggle to incorporate feminist and egalitarian ideals into their feminine role identities (Cofresi, 2002, p. 441). Moreover, Alicea (1995) suggests Latinas tend to become less accepting of infidelity in the U.S. than in their country of origin. However, Alicea also states Latinos in the U.S. in general are more tolerant of infidelity than the U.S. population in general. Understanding what factors allow for this trend is important. One possible reason may be that marianismo remains present among the Latino population, even in today's rapidly changing society.

Marianismo is a value system that equates perfection with submission. In their book *The Maria Paradox*, Gil and Vazquez (1996) provide a list of ten commandments specifying the behaviors of a "good woman" who follows the traditional, marianismo gender role. Examples from The Ten Commandments of Marianismo include: "Do not be single, self-supporting, or independent-minded," and "Do not be unhappy with your man or criticize him for infidelity, gambling, verbal and physical abuse, alcohol or drug abuse" (Gil & Vazquez, 1996, p. 8). Many Latinas may engage in self-sacrificing behaviors for the well-being of their family. Cofresi (2002) explains Latinas who endorse marianismo typically take on the burden of sacrifice in their family, often forgoing educational opportunities to take care of their family. They are often discouraged from

gaining higher levels of education by their own families and their husbands (Ybarra, 1988). As a complement to marianismo, machismo suggests “that a man’s place is *en el mundo*, in the world, and a woman’s place is *en la casa*, in the home” (Gil & Vazquez, 1996, p. 6). In traditional Latino households, it is preferable for a married woman not to work, and in particular if she has children. The high value Latinas place on maternal and domestic roles is often encouraged by their families and husbands. In this way, the cultural concepts of familismo and machismo are supported by the concept of marianismo. According to Cofresi (2002, p. 440), “women are responsible for all homemaking duties, are charged with the care of children, the elderly, and the sick, and are expected to cater to the men in their families.” Latinas may give up authority and control to their husbands because of perceived dependence on them, as well as to help their husbands maintain their sense of manhood, thus sustaining the machismo dynamic. Passive-dependence is a trait often found in older wives, as they find themselves being extremely dependent on their husbands (Santiago-Rivera et al., 2002). Factors such as lack of self-sufficiency or fear of financial and emotional distress may be behind this perceived dependence. Consequently, marianismo appears to render some women with a sense of powerlessness in decision-making and in their relationships.

Marianismo and Sexuality

Marianismo signifies “chastity before marriage, sexual passivity after marriage, and the subordination of women to men” (Cofresi, 2002, p.440). In following these traditional gender roles, women do not talk with men about sex. For Latinas who subscribe to marianismo, talking about sex may be perceived as distasteful or suggestive

of sexual promiscuity. Under these cultural constraints, Latinas are expected to appear as if they have little or no knowledge of sex. The idealized female gender role for Latinas involves being pure and asexual, an emulation of the Virgin Mary. In contrast, women who are seen as open with their sexuality and whom can be taken as mistresses are viewed as “bad” (Peñalosa, 1968). “Good” women are those who are not interested in sex. A woman subscribing to these strict gender beliefs, therefore, may refuse sexual advances from her husband to keep her image of purity intact and to maintain her role as dutiful mother. Good Latina women are supposed to be sexually attractive for their husbands, but are not supposed to enjoy sex (Cofresi, 2002; Gil & Vazquez, 1996). It is commonly known that sex in marriage is used to nurture the relationship and enhance intimacy. However, among families of Mexican origin who follow this strict gender-related socialization, sex may be viewed purely as a means for procreation. Several researchers have encountered these aspects of *marianismo* in their studies. For example, less-acculturated or more traditional marriages of Mexican origin have been described in the literature as “less-companion-oriented and more functional-based relative to White American marriages” (Negy & Snyder, 1997, p. 419). Tharp et al.’s (1968) study of acculturation among Mexican-origin wives also suggested that “although great emphasis is placed on premarital chastity and marital fidelity for the woman, satisfactory sexual relations are not considered essential” among less acculturated wives (p. 405). Furthermore, these authors point out that spouses who follow these strict gender roles do not share many interests or activities with each other, and they tend to generally have only brief moments of interaction.

It is important to understand how the Latina's marital and familial role is prescribed by marianismo and the degree to which traditional sexual gender norms change with acculturation and influence marital satisfaction. Due to the restrictive nature of marianismo, many women who are dictated by this cultural value may experience lower levels of psychological well-being. Some studies have found a link between depression and behaviors associated with the cultural value of marianismo (Marano, 2000; Saenz et al., 1989). In developing the Latina Values Scale as a scale to measure beliefs and behaviors associated with marianismo, Marano (2000) found marianismo was negatively related to both self-esteem and assertiveness among Latina college students. Although no studies have explored the specific relationship of marianismo with marital satisfaction among women of Mexican origin, the effect of gender roles on marital satisfaction has been studied.

Gender Role Values and Marital Satisfaction

In current U.S. society, Latinos and Mexican-origin individuals support traditional gender role expectations to varying degrees. Research suggests levels of acculturation likely affect the degree to which women and men of Mexican origin living in the U.S. adhere to traditional gender roles such as marianismo and machismo, or family-centered values such as familismo. Acculturation and these changing cultural values may play a key role in marriage among the Mexican-origin population.

An early study examining relationships among women of Mexican origin (deLenero, 1969, cited in Contreras et al., 1996) revealed women of Mexican origin submitted to sexual relations with their husbands as an obligation or duty. The same

study also found spouses looked to each other for affection early on in the marriage, but children later became the primary source of satisfaction for the women. These early findings may be exaggerating the rigidly demarcated gender roles prescribing behaviors among Mexican-origin women, but the study did find evidence suggesting the decline in marital satisfaction for Mexican-origin women. These findings also suggest behaviors associated with *marianismo* or *machismo* may be at play in the woman's loss of satisfaction in her marriage as she assumes the *more important* role of mother.

Marianismo dictates that Latina women be good mothers. Motherhood is strongly valued, and the role of mother may take precedence over any other role in her life, including that of wife. In sum, this early study points to the significance of the traditional role of women in the Mexican culture which emphasizes the importance of motherhood and fertility.

The sharing of value systems is an important area to consider when examining marital satisfaction. Rosen-Grandon et al. (2004) conducted a recent study on the relationship between marital characteristics, marital interaction processes, and marital satisfaction among couples in first marriages using a primarily European American sample (mean age of 39 years). The authors concluded when both spouses highly value traditional gender roles in a relationship, then satisfaction with this shared value can lead to overall marital satisfaction. According to Rosen-Grandon et al. (2004, p.65), "relationships in which there are shared values are those in which conflict is managed, gender roles are traditional, and high priorities are placed on religiosity and parenting." However, they stated that for men, satisfaction with shared values in their marriage does not necessarily lead to marital satisfaction. In contrast, women who are satisfied with

traditional gender roles and are satisfied with their common set of values shared with their husbands do tend to experience marital satisfaction. Although Rosen-Grandon et al.'s (2004) investigation was limited to European Americans, the findings from this study can have important implications for research on marital satisfaction among Mexican-origin populations where traditional gender roles may still be prevalent. Married women of Mexican origin who highly respect cultural values, such as familismo, machismo, and marianismo, and have a shared sense of satisfaction with these values with their husbands, may in fact experience greater marital satisfaction. For instance, if the marital roles for a couple were highly dictated by both marianismo and machismo and the couple experiences satisfaction with these shared values, this would possibly lead to greater marital satisfaction for the wife. Based on Rosen-Grandon et al.'s findings, then, one could speculate that women would not experience marital satisfaction if either they or their husbands differed in their adherence to traditional cultural values and gender role beliefs. The perception of shared beliefs and values may enhance the adherence of specific cultural values in predicting levels of marital satisfaction among women of Mexican origin.

In another similar study, Faulkner et al. (2005) investigated gender-related predictors of change in marital satisfaction and conflict in a predominantly White sample (only 6% of the participants were Latino). They found husbands who reported having more traditional gender roles were generally less satisfied in their marriages over time, while gender role attitudes did not predict changes in marital satisfaction for wives over time. Faulkner et al. (2005) explain husbands who have more traditional gender roles are

likely to experience more marital conflict over making decisions within the marriage because of misperceptions of equality within the relationship. The authors suggest traditional gender roles are restrictive for men in that they restrict their ability to express their emotions, which in turn can affect their psychological well-being, and consequently their marital satisfaction. The findings from their study also indicated the more hours husbands spent at work outside the home, the greater the decrease in marital satisfaction among both husbands and wives. This may have been due to less time spent together or contrasting perceptions regarding the division of household tasks. Although this study only focused on European American couples, it also provides useful information regarding gender roles and marital satisfaction, particularly regarding the restrictive nature of traditional gender roles for both men and women. For example, a strong tradition of *orgullo*, or pride, exists among Latino men, which may make it difficult for them to share emotional difficulties. Machismo emphasizes strength and arrogance among men, which may keep them from expressing their true emotions for fear of showing weakness. These issues can lead to unresolved and shelved emotions, which may then affect marital quality among both spouses.

As mentioned earlier, researchers have suggested that some mainstream perspectives and research models can be used to extend the literature on Latino populations. John Gottman's extensive research on marriage and marital interactions provides useful information for understanding marital satisfaction among Latinos and couples of Mexican origin. Gottman and Krokoff (1989) conducted a longitudinal study of marital interaction and satisfaction by observing couples during high-conflict marital

interactions. They found wives' positive affect and compliance during high-conflict interactions led to concurrent marital satisfaction for the husband. More importantly, however, they found marital satisfaction declined over time for both spouses when wives were compliant during high-conflict discussions. Gottman and Krokoff (1989) also reported marital satisfaction declined over time when wives expressed sadness or fear during these interactions, while expressing anger and contempt actually improved marital satisfaction over time. Gender differences may play a key role in the tolerance of these emotions (i.e., men may be better able to tolerate anger, as opposed to sadness or fear).

Gottman and Krokoff's findings may be relevant to the present study and may help further the understanding of marital interactions among the Latino and Mexican-origin population. The belief in long-term commitment among Latino marriages may cause spouses to become more tolerant and accepting of negative behaviors in order to avoid conflict (Santiago-Rivera et al., 2002). Santiago-Rivera et al. (2002, p. 70) maintain Latino couples "may conceptualize marriage as a 'trading partnership' where individuals assume specific roles and duties to ensure benefits in several areas such as economic stability, sexual intimacy, procreation, and household responsibilities." The results of Gottman & Krokoff's (1989) study support the marital dynamics that may occur in a marriage of Mexican origin when the wife follows traditional gender roles, such as *marianismo*. Traditional gender roles, including *machismo*, *marianismo*, and some aspects of *familismo*, restrain women in that they may feel forced to internalize their emotional responses to marital conflict. This passivity may contribute to feelings of frustration and growing dissatisfaction with their marriage. As a wife who subscribes to

marianismo, a Mexican-origin woman's compliance during conflict is helping appease her husband temporarily, but she may be harboring resentment which will contribute to her lowered marital satisfaction over time. Consequently, her resentment may be expressed subtly during future interactions with her husband, which may in turn contribute to continued animosity over the course of their marriage. In considering Gottman and Krokoff's (1989) study in terms of understanding gender differences and approaches to marital conflict, further support may be provided for an argument that beliefs and behaviors associated with marianismo may be related to lower marital satisfaction among both men and women.

Changing Gender Roles

Early research on Latino families often depicted very rigid, traditional gender roles. In 1948, Jones described the Mexican family living in the U.S. as one where gender roles were harshly defined. Jones (1948) explained the traditional Mexican-origin woman had "no other concept of her role or function in life than as a housekeeper with children" and that it was improper for women to work outside the home (p. 451). Many women of Mexican origin have been socialized to assume a woman's primary role is to be a dedicated wife and mother, devoting herself entirely to the family as a caregiver. Although a Latina's "sense of self and her sense of self in relationships" may be conditioned by the marianismo gender role to some extent (Cofresi, 2002, p. 448), not all Latinas in today's society live by strict, traditional sexual roles. Similarly, not every couple of Mexican origin is characterized by strict, male dominance. Oropesa and Landale (2004, p. 914) suggest "the archetype of the male-dominated family may be an

exaggeration for many Mexican families.” As Latinos become more acculturated to U.S. society, they take on some of the cultural values of the U.S. population. For example, acculturation often brings about changes toward less traditional gender role beliefs. However, different levels of acculturation create varying gender role attitudes and expectations.

Ybarra (1982) researched the effects of the working woman on the traditional family structure and found Latino families are not all necessarily bound by traditional gender roles. Ybarra’s study found Latino families exhibit a wide range of marital role patterns that vary from patriarchal to egalitarian. As reported by Vega (1990), recent literature regarding the Latino family has made references to “continuity in traditional cultural expectations as well as evidence of female role transformations that openly challenge male dominance or a notion of a culturally ordained division of labor” (p. 1020). Research indicates couples and families of Mexican origin living in the U.S. experience different levels of cultural change within their relationship structures. As emphasized by Ybarra (1982), Latino families are adapting to U.S. culture by changing accordingly to evolving social conditions. Acculturation plays a key role in the changes in marital roles among Mexican-origin couples.

Higher levels of acculturation among couples of Mexican origin often create the need for redefining the traditional roles of husband and wife (Casas & Ortiz, 1985). Furthermore, research shows the traditional gender roles of *marianismo* and *machismo* among Latinos are changing in today’s society. Oropesa and Landale (2004, p. 914) stress that “marriage as a rigid, hierarchically organized institutional arrangement

characterized by extreme gender segregation is undergoing a transformation as a result of the modernization and globalization of the educational system, the economy, media, and the international migratory system itself.” Specifically, the traditional female role is changing due to exposure to a politically shifting environment and as women of Mexican origin become more acculturated into the U.S. culture (Gonzalez, 1993; McAdoo, 1999; Santiago-Rivera et al., 2002). Latinas tend to experience gender role transformations and behavior and attitude changes at a quicker rate than their male counterparts, and these differences can often “create significant relational, family, and identity conflicts” (Gonzalez, 1993; Santiago-Rivera et al., 2002, p. 70). Latina and Mexican-origin women are adapting to the demands of living in the U.S., which produces inevitable effects on their family and marital relationships. For example, Nogales (1998) indicates as more Latinas in the U.S. enter the workforce due to financial need, marital conflict rises. Mexican-origin women often experience internal conflict when juggling expectations from their culture of origin and demands from the new dominant culture. In a study involving women of Mexican origin, Gonzalez (1993) investigated ethnic identification, endogamy, female achievement, and psychological distress. Gonzalez (1993) claims high-achieving women of Mexican origin continue to struggle with sex role socialization in the U.S., as they are marginalized by both their ethnic and professional role groups.

Determinants of socioeconomic status, such as level of education and income, may greatly influence gender roles among Latino men and women (Santiago-Rivera et al., 2002). Increased education may provide Latinas with greater decision-making power regarding their roles as wives and professional women, as they are exposed to more of the

mainstream U.S. beliefs and values. The rights of women in the U.S. are constantly changing and advancing, thus also having an effect on the lives and relationship dynamics of Latinos living in the U.S. (Gottman & Notarius, 2002; Santiago-Rivera et al., 2002). Simultaneously, the roles of women of Mexican origin shift in the family system, with “a lessening of the woman’s customary adherence to the values and conventions of her family of origin” (McAdoo, 1999, p. 36). However, the cultural value of familismo appears to remain a central facet of Mexican-origin culture. McAdoo (1999) explains that although women are turning toward greater independence and less dependence on male influence, the family as a source of emotional support remains central.

Egalitarian Marriage

Marital and gender role patterns among Latinos are evolving in today’s society. Research suggests marriage roles among Mexican-origin wives change toward a more egalitarian-companionate pattern during acculturation (Tharp et al., 1968). Greater numbers of women of Mexican origin in the U.S. are obtaining higher educations and engaging in egalitarian marriage relationships. According to Gonzalez’s (1993) study of high-achieving women of Mexican origin, “more highly educated and acculturated Latina women favor balanced decision-making and equal roles in conjugal relationships” (p. 143). Hirsch (2003) indicates women and men of Mexican origin are currently more and more likely to form egalitarian, companionate marriages, where emotional and sexual intimacy is given great emphasis. Hirsch explains Mexican-origin relationships are shifting due to changes in cultural orientations. More specifically, marriages are being

based more on *confianza* (trust) rather than on *respeto* (respect), which was historically traditional in many Mexican-origin marriages. Traditionally, a woman's place was behind her husband and she was to respect him as head of the household. According to Hirsch (2003), more couples of Mexican origin are now focusing on trust in the relationship and on mutual satisfaction of needs and emotional intimacy.

Egalitarian marriages have been linked to positive outcomes among women of Mexican origin. For example, Saenz et al. (1989) investigated egalitarianism by examining the effects of employment and marital relations on depression among Mexican-origin women. The results of their study indicated women who received more help from their husbands or were in a more egalitarian marital relationship experienced higher levels of marital satisfaction. Saenz et al. (1989) also found women who shared more household responsibilities with their husband and who reported greater marital satisfaction also experienced lower levels of depression than women in more traditional marital relationships.

This trend toward companionate marriage may bring about increased stress in some couples of Mexican origin who are more acculturated, however. Research suggests educated Latino men in the U.S. continue to endorse traditional beliefs regarding the woman's role in the family (Gonzalez, 1993). According to Gonzalez (1993, p. 143), men of Mexican origin are "more likely to believe that women should retain traditional sex role behaviors, thus leading to possible conflict between the sexes' notions of appropriate role behavior." Gonzalez (1993) also notes that even highly educated and acculturated women of Mexican origin may continue to experience tension and be at odds with their

husbands in their beliefs about appropriate gender role behavior. Acculturated women of Mexican origin who are in relationships with men who impose traditional gender roles may experience conflict surrounding her failure to follow traditional cultural values, such as marianismo. Alternatively, acculturated women who do not follow the tenets of marianismo and who are in relationships with men who do not subscribe to machismo or enforce the tenets of marianismo may not necessarily experience conflict surrounding these cultural issues in their marriage.

Literature Summary

Marriage has been linked to various benefits, including greater subjective well-being and healthier immune systems (Bramlett & Mosher, 2001; Farrell & Markides, 1985; Gottman & Silver, 1999; Karren et al., 2002). Moreover, several studies suggest divorced individuals experience lower levels of psychological well-being than do married individuals. Although numerous studies have explored marital functioning and satisfaction, research focused on identifying and describing the important variables that contribute to marital satisfaction is still clearly needed, given the rising divorce rates in the U.S. Divorce and separation is prevalent in the United States, and rates for divorce are increasing for Latinos as well. Very little research on marriage and marital dynamics has focused on Latinas or Mexican-origin women (Phillips & Sweeney, 2005). Furthermore, many misconceptions and assumptions exist regarding cultural values and gender roles found within Latino families and couples. Familismo, machismo, and marianismo are traditional cultural values often associated with the Latino culture that may continue to influence the daily, familial, and marital functioning of old and young generations of

Latinos to varying degrees. Research has shown women of Mexican origin experience conflict regarding differing cultural values and perceptions associated with acculturation, which may be a significant source of distress in their marriage. Understanding Mexican-origin women's marital satisfaction is critical for improving their psychological well-being and quality of life.

Acculturation is an important variable for understanding the Latino population and specific cultural values, and especially when examining marriage and marital satisfaction among couples of Mexican origin. Although a considerable amount of research has been conducted on acculturation and marital satisfaction, surprisingly, little has adequately addressed the role of cultural values. Given such evidence, it is critical to include the role of cultural beliefs and gender role attitudes in the study of marital functioning for couples of Mexican origin, and particularly for women of Mexican origin who have been found to experience a linear decline in marital satisfaction over their life course. Exploring the influences and transformations of the attitudes and beliefs that may be embedded in the Mexican culture is important for extending previous research.

Familismo is considered to be a central value in most Mexican-origin families and is characterized by the attachment and identification of individuals with their families. Familismo provides a strong sense of social support as well as a strong sense of self within the family system or unit (Santiago-Rivera et al., 2002). Related to familismo are the traditional gender roles often believed to prescribe the behavior and attitudes of many Latino men and women in the marriage and family. While marianismo stresses the woman's role as the self-sacrificing and suffering mother, machismo emphasizes the

man's dominant role as head of the household. The idealized traditional female gender role entails being chaste and submissive, while the male gender role involves being virile and aggressive (Raffaelli & Ontai, 2004). Women are expected to be dependent, while men are expected to be independent. Although these cultural values have been frequently linked to the traditional Latino and Mexican-origin family, many of these individuals currently living in the U.S. may subscribe to these cultural values to differing extents, or possibly not at all, due to a variety of factors including level of acculturation.

There is increasing evidence familismo has positive effects on marital satisfaction among Latino couples (Contreras et al., 1996; Gil & Vazquez, 1996; Santiago-Rivera et al., 2002). Having close relationships, such as those within the close-knit Mexican family unit, can promote greater self-confidence, more social support, and more feelings of security and optimism during times of distress. Traditional gender roles, such as marianismo and machismo, however, may be contributing to the general decline in marital satisfaction found among women of Mexican origin over time. Unfortunately, there is a gap in the existing literature exploring the effects of these cultural dynamics within the marriage. Interestingly, research using European Americans points to the notion that shared values among spouses and adherence to traditional gender roles can lead to marital satisfaction (Rosen-Grandon et al., 2004). If this prediction holds true for Latinos, then couples of Mexican origin who adhere to traditional cultural values, such as familismo, machismo, and marianismo and who share satisfaction in their shared values will also experience marital satisfaction. However, differences will most likely lead to marital distress or dissatisfaction.

Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of the study is to explore the influence of specific Latino cultural values on the marital satisfaction of women of Mexican origin. Research in this area has been sparse and these relationships have not been fully investigated. Examining the relationship between acculturation, familismo, marianismo, and machismo and marital satisfaction can increase understanding regarding the implications and interchange of Latino cultural values in U.S. society in order to help identify areas that may enhance psychological well-being among Mexican-origin populations. Understanding and validating the strengths within Mexican-origin relationships can be more effective in the study of marital dynamics than merely focusing on what is dysfunctional. Santiago-Rivera et al. (2002) encourage counselors and other mental health professionals to appreciate and validate the cultural values within families and to view them as strengths. The present study involves the analysis of variables that may play a part in the acculturative process and its effects on marital satisfaction and functioning among women of Mexican origin. Under the broader context of acculturation, this study is looking to investigate how these cultural factors contribute positively or negatively to marital satisfaction and functioning within couples of Mexican origin, and specifically in women of Mexican origin. The present study will allow counselors and researchers working with couples of Mexican origin to sharpen their multicultural competency and to understand the significance and influence of culture on marital relationships.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

This chapter provides a description of the methodology used in this study, including characteristics of the participants, procedures, and instruments. The research questions and hypotheses are presented in terms of the criterion and predictor variables.

Participants

Two hundred and fourteen women who self-identified as being of Mexican origin, were currently married to a man of Mexican origin, and were at least 18 years of age participated in this study. Participants were recruited through listservs of Latino/Hispanic organizations, including the National Latino/a Psychological Association, Las Comadres Para Las Americas (an informal internet-based group for Latinas to build connections within their communities), and the Center for Mexican American Studies at The University of Texas at Austin. Moreover, the snowball method was used to recruit participants. Personal contacts were asked to refer individuals or listservs of individuals who were eligible for participation in the study. Online recruitment of participants allowed for greater diversity in terms of age, generational status, number of years married, income, and geographic location.

Procedure

Approval from the University of Texas at Austin Institutional Review Board was obtained prior to the onset of this study. The ethical guidelines for human research provided by the American Psychological Association and the Institutional Review Board at the University of Texas at Austin were followed.

Participants were recruited through organizations whose membership is largely comprised of Latino/Hispanic individuals, including the National Latino/a Psychological Association, Las Comadres Para Las Americas, as well as the Center for Mexican American Studies at The University of Texas at Austin. Participants for the study were also recruited through the snowball method (i.e., through personal contacts asked to refer other qualified individuals to participate in the study). A recruitment e-mail (see Appendix A) was sent to potential participants within the Latino organizations via listservs. This e-mail included the purpose of the study, eligibility requirements, and a link to the study's website. The e-mail stated explicitly that eligible participants are those who are 18 years or older, currently married to a man of Mexican origin, and identify themselves as being of Mexican origin. Information regarding approval by the Institutional Review Board at the University of Texas at Austin was also included in the recruitment e-mail. Potential participants had the option of participating or declining the invitation to participate without disclosing their identity.

The study was completed online through an internet survey program. Informed consent issues were addressed and contact information for the principal investigator was provided on a separate screen before the participant could access the study's survey. An informed consent form (see Appendix B) provided directions for completing the survey, addressed the study's participation criteria, purpose, possible benefits and risks, and again included information regarding approval by the Institutional Review Board. After clicking on the "Accept; I agree to participate" button, each participant was asked to complete the survey. Participation was voluntary and completely anonymous, and there were no

identifiers (i.e., name, e-mail address, code, or other identification information) within the survey. The survey pages were formatted with easy navigation and an “Exit the Study” button was available on each page permitting participants to leave before completing the survey while still receiving debriefing information. An incentive in the form of gift certificate drawings (in the amount of \$25 each for a restaurant, coffee shop, or Target store) was offered to encourage participation. Once participants reached the end of the online survey, they were asked to send a separate e-mail to the researcher reporting their participation in the study if they were interested in participating in the drawings for one of three gift certificates. Three participants were randomly chosen to receive a gift certificate in the amount of \$25 for a restaurant, coffee shop, or Target store after all data were collected.

Measures

A demographic questionnaire was administered to obtain relevant descriptive information. Participants also answered a series of self-report measures aimed at quantifying the variables of interest for the study. The five variables, acculturation, familismo, perceived machismo, marianismo, and marital satisfaction were assessed by the Short Acculturation Scale (SAS) developed by Marin et al. (1987); the Familism Scale created by Lugo Steidel and Contreras (2003); the Machismo Subscale of the Multiphasic Assessment of Cultural Constructs-Short Form (MACC-SF) developed by Cuellar et al. (1995); the Latina Values Scale-Revised (LVSr) designed by Marano (2000) and revised by Melendez (2004); and the Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS)

constructed by Hendrick (1988). One supplemental question was also asked of participants regarding their tolerance for divorce.

Demographic Questionnaire

Participants were asked to provide information about their age, ethnicity, marital status, education, occupation, family income, generational status, date of marriage, length of marriage, religious affiliation, number of children, number of children living at home, and length of residence in the U.S. Generational status was determined from questions regarding the participant's place of birth, as well as their parents' and grandparents' place of birth. Participants were also asked to provide information about their husband, including the husband's age, ethnicity, education, generational status, and length of residence in the U.S. (see Appendix C). The husband's generational status (H-GEN) was utilized as a predictor variable in research hypothesis #3 for this study.

Measure of Acculturation

Acculturation was measured by the *Short Acculturation Scale (SAS)*; Marin, Sabogal, Marin, Otero-Sabogal, & Perez-Stable, 1987) (see Appendix D). Marin et al. (1987) developed the SAS to measure acculturation to U.S. society within Latino populations. Specifically, the SAS measures changes in values, norms, and behaviors of Latinos as they are exposed to U.S. culture patterns. The SAS is a 12-item, self-report scale that measures three dimensions or components of acculturation: (a) language use and preference at home, with friends, and at work (consists of 5 items); (b) language use and preference in media (consists of the next 3 items); and (c) preferred ethnicity of individuals in social relations (consists of the last 4 items) (Marin et al., 1987). Each item

is in the form of a question with a 5-point Likert-type scale of possible responses. For the first 8 items focusing on language use and preference, the responses range from: 1) only Spanish, 2) more Spanish than English, 3) both equally, 4) more English than Spanish, to 5) only English. For items 9-12, which focus on ethnic preferences in social relations, the responses range from: 1) all Latinos/Hispanics, 2) more Latinos/Hispanics than Americans, 3) about half and half, 4) more Americans than Latinos/Hispanics, to 5) all Americans. Sample items include: “What was the language(s) you used as a child?” and “What language(s) do you speak at home?” The SAS is scored by summing the responses, with higher scores reflecting higher degrees of acculturation to the dominant culture.

Marin et al. (1987) developed the SAS using both Latino ($n = 363$, mean age of 31.2 years) and non-Latino White ($n = 228$, mean age of 38.8 years) participants. The age for Latino participants ranged from 15 to 75 years. The Latino sample was reported to be primarily of Mexican and Central American origin, and the scale was found to be equally valid and reliable for both groups. The SAS has demonstrated good validity when compared to other acculturation measures (Marin et al., 1987). The authors reported a strong correlation of $r = .65$ ($p < .001$) between scores on the SAS and the participant’s generational level. Marin et al. (1987) also found a high correlation of $r = .76$ ($p < .001$) between the SAS and the participant’s own evaluation of his or her level of acculturation. The authors reported high reliability with an alpha coefficient of $\alpha = .92$ for the entire scale and subscale alphas of $\alpha = .90$ for “Language,” $\alpha = .86$ for “Media,” and $\alpha = .78$ for “Ethnic Social Relations” (Marin et al., 1987). The authors of the SAS also developed a

Spanish version of this scale with equal validity and reliability. Many researchers agree acculturation is a very important construct to measure when conducting research on Latino populations (Negy & Snyder, 2000a). The internal consistency reliability for the current sample was $\alpha = .87$.

Measure of Familismo

Familismo was measured by the *Familism Scale* (Lugo Steidel & Contreras, 2003) (see Appendix E). Lugo Steidel and Contreras (2003) developed the Familism Scale to measure attitudinal familismo for use with Latino populations. The authors constructed this scale to address the need for a measure of familismo that could be employed with less acculturated and predominantly Spanish-speaking Latinos. Lugo Steidel and Contreras (2003) used a sample of 124 Latino adults, 86.7% of which were of Puerto Rican origin (mean age of 42) when validating their scale. Although the population of interest for the current study is Mexican-origin women, the Familism Scale by Lugo Steidel and Contreras is considered useful in that it measures all important aspects of the familismo construct, and it proved to be valid with Latinos of lower socioeconomic status and lower levels of acculturation.

The Familism Scale is composed of 18 items on a 10-point Likert type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 10 (*strongly agree*). Scores are obtained by calculating the mean for the whole scale, whereby higher scores reflect higher endorsements of familismo. The Familism Scale is composed of four factors: familial support, familial interconnectedness, familial honor, and subjugation of self for family (Lugo Steidel & Contreras, 2003). Sample items include: “A person should live near his

or her parents and spend time with them on a regular basis,” and “Children should live with their parents until they get married.” Lugo Steidel and Contreras (2003) reported high internal consistency for the overall scale, with a Cronbach alpha of $\alpha = .83$. The authors reported the Familism Scale was translated into Spanish and that the Spanish items were linguistically equivalent to the items on the original scale.

The original Familism Scale was mistakenly altered for this study by using a True/False scale rather than the intended 10-point Likert type scale for each of the items. Initially, an attempt was made to recollect data from the same participants; however, only 53 of the participants agreed to participate again and fill out the Familism Scale with the Likert scale responses. Statistical analyses were then run to correlate the scale scores from the True/False and original Likert scales from the same participants to determine whether participants tended to respond to both types of scales in the same way. The correlation for the scales was $r = .747$ ($p < .01$), which demonstrates good concurrent validity. Furthermore, statistical analyses were run for the entire study using both sets of participants (214 and 53), which yielded similar results. These analyses provided stronger evidence for using the full data set ($N = 214$) collected with the True/False scale. The internal consistency reliability for the current sample was $\alpha = .69$.

Measure of Perceived Machismo

Perceived Machismo was measured by the *Machismo Subscale of the Multiphasic Assessment of Cultural Constructs-Short Form (MACC-SF; Cuellar et al., 1995)* (see Appendix F). Cuellar et al. (1995) developed five self-report subscales for the MACC-SF to measure the cultural constructs of familismo, fatalism, machismo, personalismo, and

folk beliefs among individuals of Mexican origin. The Machismo Subscale of the MACC-SF is a 17-item True/False scale used to measure gender role attitudes. The 17 statements consist of beliefs related to the cultural construct of machismo. All true items are added to obtain final scores, with higher scores indicating a higher endorsement of machismo. Scores on this scale range from 0 to 17. Cuellar et al. (1995) reported good internal reliability for the Machismo Subscale ($\alpha = .78$). Factor analysis revealed that the Machismo Subscale is composed of four factors: male superiority, male gender role, female gender role, and male strength (Cuellar et al., 1995). Sample items on this scale include: “Some equality in marriage is a good thing, but by and large the father ought to have the main say so in family matters,” and “Wives should respect the man’s position as head of the household.” Cuellar et al. also translated the items of the MACC-SF into Spanish, which are offered next to the English items in the complete scale. Cuellar et al. (1995) used a sample of 379 adults (89% of Mexican origin; mean age of 25) when validating the MACC-SF, which ensures sufficient internal consistency and reliability with this study’s population of interest.

The cultural variable of machismo was determined by examining the participant’s perception of her husband’s endorsement of machismo and is referred to as “perceived machismo” throughout this dissertation. The current study uses the Machismo Subscale of the MACC-SF to measure perceived machismo among women of Mexican origin. In addition to measuring marianismo, obtaining a woman’s perception of her husband’s machismo allows for further examination of the effects of traditional gender role attitudes and beliefs on her internal experiences and potential internal conflicts. Furthermore,

assessing the differences in the woman's endorsement of marianismo and her perception of her husband's endorsement of machismo produces valuable information for understanding the couple's relationship structure and its effects on the woman's level of satisfaction within their marriage. In order to measure perceived machismo, the original Machismo Subscale was modified by adding the following statement before each of the original items: "My husband believes or would say." The internal consistency reliability for the current sample was $\alpha = .84$.

Measure of Marianismo

Marianismo was measured by the *Latina Values Scale-Revised (LVSR; Melendez, 2004; LVS; Marano, 2000)* (see Appendix G). Marano (2000) developed the original Latina Values Scale (LVS) to measure the Latino cultural concept of *marianismo*, using 63 English-speaking, Latina college students. According to Marano (2000), the LVS allows researchers and clinicians to learn what traditional values the Latina woman holds and which if any she would like to change, thus providing areas of direct clinical intervention. The LVS was created by using characteristics of marianismo listed in the book *The Maria Paradox: How Latinas Can Merge Old World Traditions with New World Self-Esteem* by Gil and Vazquez (1996) and from other literature pertaining to Latinas (Marano, 2000). The LVS was revised and translated into Spanish for greater clinical use with a more diverse population (LVSR; Melendez, 2004). The LVSR was revised using a larger and more diverse non-clinical sample of Latinas (N = 101; mean age of 38.7) whose primary language was Spanish. The majority of the sample was born in the Spanish-speaking Caribbean region (42.6%; e.g., Puerto Rico, Dominican

Republic), but it also included Latin American born Latinas (18.8%; e.g., Mexico, Ecuador). Melendez (2004) revised the original scale to account for differences in SES, education, and acculturation by using a sample from the community. The LVSR uses items from the original LVS but the authors modified some of the wording in order to increase relevance across Latino groups and nationalities. The LVSR is a 27-item self-report questionnaire measuring the endorsement of marianismo behaviors or beliefs. Responses for the items are on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Sample items include: “I try to make my family happy at all costs” and “I often feel inferior in comparison to men.” The LVSR is scored by summing the participant’s responses, with higher scores reflecting higher degrees of marianismo.

The original LVS includes a Satisfaction Scale (i.e., “How satisfied are you with your response?”), which is used to identify aspects of marianismo that are subjective sources of conflict or satisfaction for the participant. The author of the LVSR argues that the wording of this Satisfaction subscale may not be clear and therefore, changed the question for this subscale to read: “Has the response to this question caused you problems or conflicts in your life?” The newly named subscale, the Conflict Subscale (CONF), provides a subjective response to each of the marianismo values, thus measuring the conflict directly related to the issues measured by the LVSR. The Conflict Subscale is scored by summing the participant’s responses, with higher scores reflecting higher degrees of conflict. In the current study, the LVSR was used for the main hypotheses,

whereas the Conflict Subscale scores were used in correlational analyses to provide further information regarding the relationships found in the main analyses.

The LVSR was shown to be valid and reliable in capturing the cultural construct of marianismo (Melendez, 2004). The LVSR was reported to have high internal consistency, with an alpha of $\alpha = .94$, while Marano (2000) reported a Cronbach alpha of $\alpha = .87$ for the original LVS. The Conflict Subscale of the LVSR also had good reliability, with an alpha of $\alpha = .95$, while the original LVS had an alpha of $\alpha = .86$ (Melendez, 2000). Melendez (2004) indicates that the Conflict Subscale will provide evidence that women with higher levels of marianismo will experience greater conflict. The internal consistency reliability for the LVSR with the current sample was $\alpha = .88$, while the Conflict Subscale had an alpha of $\alpha = .94$.

Measure of Marital Satisfaction

Marital satisfaction was measured by the *Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS*; Hendrick, 1988) (see Appendix H). The RAS, developed by Hendrick (1988), is a 7-item measure of global relationship satisfaction. The statements are measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale and express both positive and negative attitudes about the marriage. Sample items on the RAS include: “In general, how satisfied are you with your relationship?” “How good is your relationship compared to most?,” and “How often do you wish you hadn’t gotten in this relationship?” Scores range from 1 (*low satisfaction*) to 5 (*high satisfaction*). The RAS has a scale range of 7 to 35 and is scored in a direction whereby higher scores reflect higher levels of relationship satisfaction.

Hendrick (1988) reported strong internal consistency for the RAS, with an alpha coefficient of $\alpha = .86$. The RAS also possesses good convergent validity, with an $r = .80$ correlation with the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS; Spanier, 1976), another widely used measure of marital adjustment. Hendrick reported the RAS has good predictive ability for couples who remain together versus those who do not remain together. The RAS used a convenience sample of undergraduate students (57 couples). Vaughn and Matyastic-Baier (1999) later reexamined the validity and reliability of the RAS with a larger and more diverse, clinical sample. They explored the relationship between total scores on the RAS and both total and scale scores on the DAS. Vaughn and Matyastic-Baier's (1999) sample consisted of 118 married (44.1%) and remarried (16.9%) participants, with ages ranging from 18 to 54 years old, and whose committed relationships ranged from 1 to 32 years. The coefficient alpha for the RAS total scores was $\alpha = .91$, with interitem correlations ranging from $r = .35$ to $r = .80$. Vaughn and Matyastic-Baier's (1999) results provided evidence that the RAS is psychometrically sound and further supported the criterion-related validity of the RAS as a measure of relationship satisfaction. Vaughn and Matyastic-Baier (1999) argue the RAS may indeed be a more "parsimonious measure of satisfaction," as it measures "only individuals' perceptions" and "does not confound attitudes and behaviors as the DAS does" (p. 145). Moreover, Contreras et al.'s (1996) study examining marital love and satisfaction in Mexican origin and European American couples provided support for the appropriateness of the use of the RAS with couples of Mexican origin. The internal consistency reliability for the current sample was $\alpha = .93$.

Supplemental Question

A supplemental question was created by the author of this dissertation to measure the participants' tolerance for divorce (DIV) (see Appendix I). Tolerance for divorce was measured by asking participants to indicate to what degree they think divorce is acceptable, using a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*Very Unacceptable*) to 5 (*Very Acceptable*). Higher scores reflect greater acceptance or tolerance for divorce. For this study, the mean tolerance for divorce was 3.26 ($SD = 1.37$).

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Research Question #1: What is the relationship between familismo and marital satisfaction among women of Mexican origin?

Hypothesis #1: Familismo will be positively correlated with marital satisfaction among women of Mexican origin.

It is expected that women who endorse higher levels of familismo will report higher levels of marital satisfaction. Conversely, women who endorse lower levels of familismo will report lower levels of marital satisfaction. This hypothesis is based on the Latino literature suggesting family support and strong family values help increase marital satisfaction and help keep the divorce rate down among the Latino population (Frisbie, 1986; Nogales, 1998; Santiago-Rivera et al., 2002).

Research Question #2: What is the relationship between marianismo, perceived machismo, and marital satisfaction among women of Mexican origin?

Hypothesis #2: The interaction between corresponding levels of marianismo and perceived machismo (i.e., higher marianismo/higher perceived machismo or lower marianismo/lower perceived machismo) will be positively correlated with marital satisfaction, whereas the interaction between dissimilar levels (i.e., higher marianismo/lower perceived machismo or lower marianismo/higher perceived machismo) will be negatively correlated with marital satisfaction among women of Mexican origin.

It is expected that a sense of shared cultural values will contribute to greater marital satisfaction, whereas conflicting cultural values will contribute to lowered marital satisfaction. Specifically, women who report similar or corresponding levels of marianismo and perceived machismo (i.e., variables are both high or low, indicating a positive correlation) will report higher levels of marital satisfaction. Conversely, women who report dissimilar levels of marianismo and perceived machismo (i.e., one variable is high and the other is low, indicating a negative correlation) will report lower levels of marital satisfaction. Satisfaction with shared values, particularly the mutual value placed on traditional gender roles in a relationship by both spouses, has been linked to greater marital satisfaction among married women (Rosen-Grandon et al., 2004).

Research Question #3: What is the relationship between the participant's level of acculturation, the husband's generational status, and marital satisfaction among women of Mexican origin?

Hypothesis #3: The interaction between corresponding degrees of participant acculturation level and husband generational status (i.e., lower participant acculturation/lower generational status of husband (i.e., 1st generation) or higher participant acculturation/higher generational status of husband (i.e., 3rd generation)) will be positively correlated with marital satisfaction, whereas the interaction between dissimilar levels (i.e., lower participant acculturation/higher husband generational status or higher participant acculturation/lower husband generational status) will be negatively correlated with marital satisfaction among women of Mexican origin.

It is expected that similarities in levels of acculturation among the participants and their husbands will contribute to greater marital satisfaction, whereas differences will contribute to lowered marital satisfaction. Specifically, women who are highly acculturated and whose husband's generational status is high, as well as women who are less acculturated and whose husband's generational status is low, will report higher levels of marital satisfaction. However, women who are highly acculturated and whose husband's generational status is low, as well as women who are less acculturated and whose husband's generational status is high, will report lower levels of marital satisfaction. Previous research has linked lower levels of acculturation with higher levels of marital satisfaction among couples of Mexican origin (Casas & Ortiz, 1985; Flores et al., 2004; Negy & Snyder, 1997). Furthermore, similarities in levels of acculturation or generational status among spouses (i.e., both Mexican-born) have been linked with greater levels of marital satisfaction among couples of Mexican origin (Casas & Ortiz, 1985).

Data Analysis

Data from 214 women of Mexican origin were included in the data analyses using SPSS Version 11.0. The major variables of interest in this study were marital satisfaction, familismo, marianismo, perceived machismo, acculturation level, and husband's generational status. Descriptive statistics were obtained to help examine demographic components of the sample and organize all study variables. Preliminary regression analyses identified specific demographic factors which were significant predictors of marital satisfaction across the sample to use as control variables. Correlational analyses were then used to determine relationships between variables of interest. Pearson Product Moment and Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficients were employed to describe the magnitude and direction of the relationships. Finally, this study employed hierarchical regression analyses to create models of the aforementioned variables.

Hierarchical regression analysis, which involves a multi-step analysis, was used for this study because it allows for the partitioning of the variance of each variable. Hierarchical regression analyses were utilized to assess the role of the variables of interest in predicting marital satisfaction among women of Mexican origin, while controlling for specific demographic factors, including family income, age, and number of children at home. In a hierarchical regression analysis, the researcher decides not only how many predictors to enter into a multiple regression equation but also the order in which they are entered. The order of entry is based on logical or theoretical considerations. In this particular study, the demographic variables were entered as a set in the first step of each hierarchical regression to control for the effects of these

sociocultural factors on marital satisfaction. These analyses include the predictor variables of familismo, marianismo, perceived machismo, participant acculturation level, and husband's generational status, and the interactions of marianismo x perceived machismo and acculturation x husband's generational status. The criterion variable in these analyses was marital satisfaction.

Familismo was the variable of interest in the first hypothesis. Familismo was entered as the third step in the hierarchical regression analysis, after entering three control variables (age, family income, and number of children at home) in the first step and the other two cultural variables, marianismo and perceived machismo, in the second step. This analysis determined the effects of familismo on marital satisfaction among women of Mexican origin above and beyond the control variables and the other cultural variables.

The hierarchical regression analyses for the second and third hypotheses utilized interaction variables as the variables of interest. All predictor variables were centered before creating the interactions, as centering the predictors reduces potential multicollinearity between the predictors and interactions. Another advantage of centering is that it allows for more meaningful interpretations of the model coefficients. The interaction between marianismo and perceived machismo was the variable of interest in hypothesis #2. In this hierarchical regression analysis, the control variables were entered in step one, the three cultural variables (familismo, marianismo, and perceived machismo) were entered in step two, and the interaction (marianismo x perceived machismo) was entered in step 3. This hierarchical regression analysis produced the

amount of variance in marital satisfaction that is explained by this interaction above and beyond the other predictor variables.

The interaction between the participant's level of acculturation and husband's generational status was the variable of interest in hypothesis #3. In this hierarchical regression analysis, the control variables were entered in step one, acculturation and husband's generational status were entered in step two, and the interaction (acculturation x husband's generational status) was entered in step 3. This hierarchical regression analysis produced the amount of variance in marital satisfaction that is explained by this interaction above and beyond the other predictor variables.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to examine acculturation and the influence of specific Latino cultural values on marital satisfaction among women of Mexican origin. Two hundred and fourteen married women of Mexican origin completed demographic questionnaires and measures of acculturation, familismo, marianismo, perceived machismo, and marital satisfaction. The criterion variable in this study was marital satisfaction and the predictor variables were familismo, marianismo, perceived machismo, acculturation, and husband's generational status. This chapter provides the descriptive aspects of the sample and instruments used in the study. In addition to the main hypotheses, this study was interested in looking at correlations among the variables used in the study. Correlation information regarding these variables is also presented. Finally, the research hypotheses, analyses used, and results of the study are presented. The research design for this study employed a descriptive survey method, and a significance level of $p < .05$ was used as the criterion for significance for all statistical analyses.

Descriptive Analyses

Preliminary analyses were performed to obtain descriptive statistics for all demographic measures, as well as for the marital and cultural measures. A preliminary multiple regression analysis was also conducted to determine if specific demographic variables (age, educational level, length of marriage, number of children, number of

children living at home with the couple, family income, or husband's educational level) accounted for a significant amount of the variance or were significant predictors of the variable of interest (marital satisfaction). Any of these variables determined to have a statistically significant relationship with marital satisfaction were included as control variables in the main analyses. Controlling for these variables minimized the possibility of observing spurious associations between the predictor variables and marital satisfaction. Results of the preliminary multiple regression analysis revealed that family income had a statistically significant effect on marital satisfaction ($\beta = 0.22$, $t(7, 206) = 3.052$, $p = .003$). Furthermore, it should be noted that the standardized coefficient (β) of family income demonstrated a sufficiently strong relationship with marital satisfaction ($\beta > \pm 0.20$) to warrant using it as a control variable. Income is a sociodemographic factor commonly associated with acculturation and is generally an indicator of socioeconomic resources. Moreover, literature on marriage and divorce suggests longer-lasting marriages are linked to higher levels of family income (Bramlett & Mosher, 2001; Bramlett & Mosher, 2002). In addition to income, age and number of children are other factors often considered when examining marital distress and divorce rates (Bramlett & Mosher, 2001; Bramlett & Mosher, 2002). In this study, the demographic variables of age and number of children at home were also included as control variables in the main analyses, as their standardized coefficients also demonstrated sufficiently strong relationships with marital satisfaction. Age ($\beta = -0.257$, $t(7, 206) = -1.890$, $p = .06$) and number of children living at home ($\beta = -0.252$, $t(7, 206) = -1.842$, $p = .067$) had marginally significant relationships with marital satisfaction. In sum, the three demographic variables included

as control variables in the hierarchical regression analyses were family income, age, and number of children at home. All three variables had the potential to impact the effects of the other variables examined in this study. Given the strength of the relationship between the control variables and marital satisfaction, it would be more difficult for the hypothesized relationships to be statistically significant. Specifically, the variables representing the hypothesized relationships will need to explain a statistically significant amount of the variance of marital satisfaction above and beyond the variance explained by the three control variables.

Description of Sample

A total of 278 women participated in the study, but only 214 participants met the inclusion criteria and were included in the statistical analyses. Participants who were not currently, legally married ($n = 8$) or were not of Mexican origin ($n = 17$) were excluded from the study. Thirty-nine participants were eliminated from the sample because they failed to respond to a large number of items.

Participants ranged in age from 19 to 68, with a mean age of $M = 37$ ($SD = 10$). Generational status was determined from questions regarding participants', parents', and grandparents' place of birth. Forty-nine participants (22.9%) were of first generation (born outside and having immigrated to the United States). Eighty-three participants (38.8%) were of second generation (born in the United States to at least one Mexican-born parent). The remaining 82 participants (38.3%) were of third generation or later (born in the United States to U.S.-born parents and had at least one grandparent who was Mexican-born, or neither parents nor grandparents were born in Mexico but participant

self-reported being of Mexican origin). Of the 49 women who were of first generation, the average length of residence in the U.S. was 21.10 years ($SD = 11.90$). A total of 18.3% ($n = 9$) of these first generation participants reported having lived in the U.S. less than 10 years, whereas 44.9% ($n = 22$) indicated 10 to 24 years and 36.7% ($n = 18$) indicated 25 years or more.

The number of years married for participants ranged from 6 months to 46 years ($M = 11.51$, $SD = 10.67$). Most of the participants ($n = 192$, 89.7%) reported they were currently in their first marriage, while 8.9% ($n = 19$) indicated they were in their second and 1.4% ($n = 3$) indicated they were in their third. The total number of children ranged from 0 to 5 ($M = 1.49$, $SD = 1.24$), while the number of children currently living at home with the couple ranged from 0 to 5 ($M = 1.19$, $SD = 1.12$). A total of 35.5% ($n = 76$) participants reported having no children living at home, while 62.1% ($n = 133$) reported having 1 to 3 and 2.4% ($n = 5$) reported having 4 to 5 children living at home.

In terms of income, the majority (55.6%, $n = 119$) of the sample reported higher yearly family incomes of \$70,000 or more. In terms of educational level, 4.7% ($n = 10$) of the participants had only completed high school, 23.8% ($n = 51$) had completed some college, 38.8% ($n = 83$) had received a college degree, and 32.7% ($n = 70$) had obtained a masters or doctoral degree. With respect to religious affiliation, the majority of the participants (82.2%, $n = 176$) identified as Catholic. Additional demographic data for the participants can be found in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Study Sample

Variables		Frequency (Percent)
Age	19-24	14 (6.6)
	25-34	94 (43.9)
	35-44	48 (22.4)
	45-54	41 (19.2)
	55-68	17 (7.9)
Place of Birth	Mexico	49 (22.9)
	United States	165 (77.1)
Generational Status	First	49 (22.9)
	Second	83 (38.8)
	Third	82 (38.3)
Religion	Catholic	176 (82.2)
	Protestant	18 (8.4)
	Christian	12 (5.6)
	Jewish	1 (0.5)
	None	7 (3.3)
Highest Education	Less than High School	0 (0)
	High School	10 (4.7)
	Some College	51 (23.8)
	College Degree	83 (38.8)
	Masters/Doctoral Degree	70 (32.7)
Number of Times Married	One	192 (89.7)
	Two	19 (8.9)
	Three	3 (1.4)
Number of Years Married	6 months - 7 years	105 (49.1)
	8 - 15 years	49 (22.9)
	16 - 24 years	27 (12.6)
	25+ years	33 (15.4)
Number of Children at Home	0	76 (35.5)
	1-3	133 (62.1)
	4-5	5 (2.4)
Work Status	Employed	185 (86.4)
	Unemployed	29 (13.6)
Family Income	Less than \$10,000	0 (0)
	\$10,000-19,999	4 (1.9)
	\$20,000-29,999	13 (6.1)
	\$30,000-39,999	15 (7.0)
	\$40,000-49,999	17 (7.9)
	\$50,000-69,999	46 (21.5)
	\$70,000 or more	119 (55.6)

Note: N = 214

Participants also provided demographic information about their husbands and responded to questions regarding their generational status. Generational status is a factor often associated with acculturation and cultural adjustment (Cuellar et al., 1995; Marin et al., 1987). Previous research has revealed a positive correlation between acculturation and generational status (Cuellar et al., 1995; Cuellar et al., 1997). Therefore, generational status was used as a proxy for the husband's level of acculturation in the analyses. Sixty-eight (31.8%) of the participants' husbands were first generation, while 81 (37.9%) were third generation or later. The majority (68.2%, $n = 146$) were born in the United States. The participants' husbands ranged in age from 21 to 72, with a mean age of 39.21 ($SD = 11.08$). Additional demographic data for the participants' husbands can be found in Table 2.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics for Study Sample – Husband Demographics

Variables		Frequency (Percent)
Husband's Age	21-24	8 (3.7)
	25-34	85 (39.7)
	35-44	60 (28.0)
	45-54	36 (16.8)
	55-72	25 (11.7)
Husband's Place of Birth	Mexico	68 (31.8)
	United States	146 (68.2)
Husband's Generational Status	First	68 (31.8)
	Second	65 (30.4)
	Third	81 (37.9)
Husband's Highest Education	Elementary School	1 (0.5)
	Middle School	3 (1.4)
	High School	43 (20.1)
	Some College	56 (26.2)
	College Degree	71 (33.2)
	Masters/Doctoral Degree	40 (18.7)

Note: N = 214

Description of Measures

Descriptive statistics for the measures included in the study, including means, standard deviation, potential range, and actual range, are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics for Instruments

Instrument	Mean	Std. Dev.	Potential Range	Actual Range
RAS	27.24	6.678	7-35	7-35
FAM	11.29	2.796	0-18	2-17
MACH	6.14	3.882	0-17	0-16
LVSF	84.78	16.657	27-135	41-125
Conflict Subscale	79.14	21.445	27-135	27-130
SAS	39.41	7.437	12-60	18-55
DIV	3.26	1.372	1-5	1-5

Note: N = 214

Note: Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS) measured marital satisfaction; Familism Scale (FAM) measured familismo; Machismo Subscale of the MACC-SF (MACH) measured machismo; Latina Values Scale-Revised (LVSF) measured marianismo; Short Acculturation Scale (SAS) measured acculturation; Supplemental Question on Tolerance for Divorce (DIV) measured tolerance for divorce.

Correlations Among Study Variables

Pearson product-moment and Spearman rank order correlation coefficients were computed to examine relationships among the variables used in the study. An intercorrelation matrix is presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Intercorrelation Matrix of Predictor and Criterion Variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Marital Satisfaction ^a	--							
2. Familismo ^a	.109	--						
3. Machismo ^a	-.263**	.260**	--					
4. Marianismo ^a	-.354**	.333**	.370**	--				
5. Conflict with Marianismo ^a	-.443**	.178**	.318**	.688**	--			
6. Acculturation ^a	.086	.075	-.003	.014	.063	--		
7. Husband's Generational Status ^b	.054	.003	-.034	.008	.006	.479**	--	
8. Tolerance for Divorce ^a	-.151*	-.202**	-.117	-.079	-.038	-.096	-.108	--

Note: N = 214

Note: $p < 0.01^{**}$; $p < 0.05^{*}$

Note: a. Pearson Correlation; b. Spearman correlation

Note: 1. Marital Satisfaction measured with Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS); 2. Familismo measured with Familism Scale (FAM); 3. Machismo measured with Machismo Subscale of the MACC-SF (MACH); 4. Marianismo measured with Latina Values Scale-Revised (LVSF); 5. Conflict with Marianismo measured with Conflict Subscale of the LVSF (CONF); 6. Acculturation measured with Short Acculturation Scale (SAS); 7. Husband's Generational Status (H-GEN); 8. Supplemental Question on Tolerance for Divorce (DIV)

An examination of Table 4 reveals that marital satisfaction was significantly and negatively correlated with marianismo ($r = -.354$) and perceived machismo ($r = -.260$). Specifically, marital satisfaction decreased as the endorsement of marianismo and perceived machismo increased. Although the Conflict Subscale of the LVSF was not utilized in the main hypotheses, this scale was explored in the correlational analyses to provide further information regarding the relationship between marianismo and marital

satisfaction. Marital satisfaction was significantly and negatively correlated with the level of perceived conflict with marianismo, as measured by scores on the Conflict Subscale of the LVSR ($r = -.443$). Specifically, participants who indicated a higher level of perceived conflict with their endorsement of marianismo reported lower levels of marital satisfaction. Correlational analyses revealed no statistically significant relationship between marital satisfaction and familismo ($r = .109$, $p = 0.112$). In this study a hierarchical regression approach was favored over a simple Pearson correlation, as it allowed the researcher to take into account other variables impacting the relationship between the two variables of interest. Therefore, the hierarchical regression analysis to follow, which held the effects of other demographic and cultural variables constant, was used to further explore the relationship between familismo and marital satisfaction (see examination of hypothesis #1).

Statistically significant, positive correlations were found among all three Latino cultural variables, suggesting small to moderately strong interrelationships. Marianismo and perceived machismo were significantly and moderately correlated ($r = .370$). Familismo was correlated significantly and moderately with marianismo ($r = .333$) and showed a smaller correlation with perceived machismo ($r = .260$). Additionally, marianismo was significantly and strongly correlated with the level of perceived conflict with marianismo ($r = .688$), while perceived machismo showed a moderate correlation with level of perceived conflict with marianismo ($r = .318$). Correlational analyses revealed no statistically significant relationships among acculturation and any of these cultural variables, but did reveal that acculturation and husband generational status were

significantly and moderately correlated ($r = .479$). Specifically, participants who endorsed higher levels of acculturation tended to be married to men who were also more acculturated.

Statistically significant relationships were also found when examining participants' tolerance for divorce. The correlation between familismo and tolerance for divorce was $r = -0.202$ ($p = 0.003$), which was statistically significant and suggested that the level of familismo decreased as the tolerance for divorce increased. Evidently, participants who endorsed a higher tolerance for divorce, or viewed divorce as more acceptable, tended to endorse lower levels of familismo. Marital satisfaction was also significantly and negatively correlated with tolerance for divorce ($r = -.151$), suggesting that marital satisfaction decreased as participants' tolerance for divorce increased. Gathering information regarding the participants' tolerance for divorce provided further insight into the relationship between familismo and marital satisfaction, and will be discussed further in the next chapter.

While not a central research question, the relationships among the control variables and marital satisfaction were also explored with correlational analyses. The control variables, family income, age, and number of children, yielded some results consistent with previous research. For example, the correlation between marital satisfaction and number of children living at home was $r = -0.254$ ($p < 0.001$), which indicates that as the number of children living in the home increased, marital satisfaction decreased. These results are consistent with prior research suggesting marital satisfaction declines during the childbearing years (Anderson et al., 1983; Bean et al., 1977; Markides

& Hoppe, 1985; Markides et al., 1999; Picker, 2005). Marital satisfaction and age were not significantly correlated ($r = -0.119$, $p = 0.082$), but did reveal the trend described in the literature suggesting marital satisfaction decreases with age among women of Mexican origin (Markides & Hoppe, 1985). The correlation between marital satisfaction and family income was $r = 0.159$ ($p = 0.02$), which was statistically significant and suggested that levels of marital satisfaction increased as family income increased among women of Mexican origin. These results are consistent with previous research linking longer-lasting marriages with higher levels of family income (Bramlett & Mosher, 2001; Bramlett & Mosher, 2002; Markides & Hoppe, 1985).

Examination of Research Study Hypotheses

A series of hierarchical regression analyses were conducted to test the three hypotheses for this study. The hierarchical regressions measured the extent to which variables of interest predicted marital satisfaction among women of Mexican origin above and beyond other control and predictor variables.

Research Hypothesis #1: Familismo will be positively correlated with marital satisfaction among women of Mexican origin (i.e., Women who endorse higher levels of familismo will report higher levels of marital satisfaction).

To examine this first hypothesis, a hierarchical regression was conducted with marital satisfaction as the criterion variable and the control variables entered as the first step. The control variables (family income, age, and number of children at home) as a

whole accounted for a significant amount of variance ($R^2 = .116$, $F(3, 210) = 9.167$, $p < .001$). In the second step of the hierarchical regression, marianismo and perceived machismo were entered. Familismo was entered as a third step in the hierarchical regression. Entering marianismo and perceived machismo together in the second step of the hierarchical regression resulted in a significant change in R-square ($\Delta R^2 = .110$, $\Delta F(2, 208) = 14.714$, $p < .001$). That is, when marianismo and perceived machismo were entered into the regression model together, they accounted for a significant change in the amount of variance of marital satisfaction explained above and beyond that accounted for by the control variables alone. When familismo was finally added as a third step in the hierarchical regression, it too accounted for a significant change in the amount of variance explained above and beyond all other variables combined ($\Delta R^2 = .051$, $\Delta F(1, 207) = 14.729$, $p < .001$). The adjusted R squared value was .26. This indicates that 26% of the variance in marital satisfaction was explained by the model.

A more detailed look at the standardized beta coefficients for familismo reveals that as the level of familismo increased, marital satisfaction also increased, when all other variables were held constant. In other words, even when marianismo and perceived machismo are endorsed by the participant, familismo has a positive effect on marital satisfaction. The medium effect size for this variable ($\beta = 0.247$) indicates a moderate, positive relationship between marital satisfaction and familismo.

Table 5. Hierarchical Regression for Familismo

	Adjusted R^2	ΔR^2	ΔF (df1, df2)	p-value	β
Family Income	0.103	0.116	9.167 (3, 210)	< 0.001	0.221
Age					-0.175
Number of Children					-0.236
Marianismo	0.207	0.110	14.714 (2, 208)	< 0.001	-0.293
Perceived Machismo					-0.090
Familismo	0.256	0.051	14.729 (1, 207)	< 0.001	0.247

Note: N = 214

Note: Family income, age, and number of children at home are control variables.

Research Hypothesis #2: The interaction between corresponding levels of marianismo and perceived machismo (i.e., higher marianismo/higher perceived machismo or lower marianismo/lower perceived machismo) will be positively correlated with marital satisfaction, whereas the interaction between dissimilar levels (i.e., higher marianismo/lower perceived machismo or lower marianismo/higher perceived machismo) will be negatively correlated with marital satisfaction among women of Mexican origin.

To investigate this second hypothesis, a hierarchical regression analysis was performed. Again, the three control variables (family income, age, and number of children at home) were entered in step one. This first step of the analysis revealed how much of the variance in marital satisfaction is explained by these demographic variables. The control variables as a whole accounted for a significant amount of variance ($R^2 = 0.116$, $F(3, 210) = 9.167$, $p < .001$). Next, in step two, three variables of interest (familismo, marianismo, and perceived machismo) were entered to determine the effects of these variables on marital satisfaction. This step reveals how much of the variance in

marital satisfaction is explained by these cultural variables above and beyond the control variables. When adding familismo, marianismo, and perceived machismo in the second step of the hierarchical regression, there is a significant change in R-square ($\Delta R^2 = 0.161$, $\Delta F(3, 207) = 15.367$, $p < .001$). That is, when these predictor variables were entered into the regression model together, they accounted for a significant change in the amount of variance of marital satisfaction explained above and beyond that accounted for by the control variables alone. In step three, the interaction of marianismo x perceived machismo was entered to determine the amount of variance in marital satisfaction that is explained by this interaction above and beyond the other predictor variables alone. When this interaction was finally added in the third step of the hierarchical regression, it did not account for a significant change in the amount of variance explained above and beyond all other variables combined ($\Delta R^2 = 0.001$, $\Delta F(1, 206) = .160$, $p = .690$). The adjusted R squared value was .25. This indicates that 25% of the variance in marital satisfaction was explained by the model. The interaction variable composed of the marianismo and perceived machismo variables did not result in a significant relationship ($\beta = 0.024$, $p = 0.690$). Possible explanations for these results are discussed in the next chapter.

A more detailed look at the standardized beta coefficients for perceived machismo reveals that as the degree of perceived machismo increased, marital satisfaction decreased. The small effect size for this variable ($\beta = -0.137$, $p = .039$) indicates a weak relationship between marital satisfaction and perceived machismo. A more detailed look at the standardized beta coefficients for marianismo reveals that as the degree of marianismo increased, marital satisfaction decreased. The medium effect size for this

variable ($\beta = -0.359$, $p < .001$) indicates a moderate relationship between marital satisfaction and marianismo. Of the three cultural variables used in this study, marianismo, perceived machismo and familismo, the marianismo variable demonstrated the strongest relationship with marital satisfaction.

Table 6: Hierarchical Regression for Marianismo x Perceived Machismo

	Adjusted R^2	ΔR^2	ΔF (df1, df2)	p-value	β
Family Income	0.103	0.116	9.167 (3, 210)	< 0.001	0.221
Age					-0.175
Number of Children					-0.236
Familismo	0.256	0.161	15.367 (3, 207)	< 0.001	0.247
Marianismo					-0.359
Perceived Machismo					-0.137
Marianismo x Perceived Machismo	0.253	0.001	0.160 (1, 206)	0.690	0.024

Note: N = 214

Note: Family income, age, and number of children at home are control variables.

Research Hypothesis #3: The interaction between corresponding degrees of participant acculturation level and husband generational status (i.e., lower participant acculturation/lower generational status of husband (i.e., 1st generation) or higher participant acculturation/higher generational status of husband (i.e., 3rd generation)) will be positively correlated with marital satisfaction, whereas the interaction between dissimilar levels (i.e., lower participant acculturation/higher husband generational status or higher participant acculturation/lower husband generational status) will be negatively correlated with marital satisfaction among women of Mexican origin.

To investigate hypothesis #3, another hierarchical regression analysis was performed. The three control variables (family income, age, and number of children at home) were entered in step one. This first step of the analysis revealed how much of the variance in marital satisfaction is explained by these demographic variables. The control variables as a whole accounted for a significant amount of variance ($R^2 = .116$, $F(3, 210) = 9.167$, $p < .001$). Next, in step two, the two variables of interest (acculturation and husband's generational status) were entered to determine the effects of these variables on marital satisfaction. This step reveals how much more of the variance in marital satisfaction is explained by acculturation and husband's generational status above and beyond the control variables. Adding acculturation and husband's generational status in the second step of the hierarchical regression produced no significant change in R-square ($\Delta R^2 = 0.013$, $\Delta F(2, 208) = 1.524$, $p = .220$). That is, when these predictor variables were entered into the regression model together, they did not account for a significant change in the amount of variance of marital satisfaction explained above and beyond that accounted for by the control variables alone. In step three, the interaction of acculturation x husband's generational status was entered to determine the amount of variance in marital satisfaction that is explained by this interaction above and beyond the other predictor variables alone. When this interaction was finally added in the third step of the hierarchical regression, it also did not account for a significant change in the amount of variance explained above and beyond all other variables combined ($\Delta R^2 = 0.011$, $\Delta F(1, 207) = 2.650$, $p = .105$). The adjusted *R* squared value was .12. This indicates that 12% of the variance in marital satisfaction was explained by the model. The interaction variable

composed of the participant's level of acculturation by the husband's generational status variable was not significant ($\beta = -0.114$, $p = 0.105$). Possible explanations for these results are discussed in the next chapter.

Table 7: Hierarchical Regression for Acculturation x Husband's Generational Status

	Adjusted R^2	ΔR^2	ΔF (df1, df2)	p-value	β
Family Income	0.103	0.116	9.167 (3, 210)	< 0.001	0.221
Age					-0.175
Number of Children					-0.236
Acculturation	0.108	0.013	1.524 (2, 208)	0.220	0.024
Husband's Generational Status					0.104
Acculturation x Husband's Generational Status	0.115	0.011	2.650 (1, 207)	0.105	-0.114

Note: N = 214

Note: Family income, age, and number of children at home are control variables.

Additional Analyses

Posthoc analyses were conducted to explore the effects of education on the current findings, as a large percentage (71.5%) of the sample in the study was well-educated, with either a college, master's, or doctoral degree. Specifically, the three main analyses were repeated using data from the participants who obtained a college degree or higher ($n = 153$). The three regression analyses were then conducted using data from the participants who completed some college or less education ($n = 61$). Although the results from these additional analyses were similar to those found in the main analyses, caution should be used when interpreting them, as the sample sizes used were small.

The findings from the hierarchical regression analysis for the first hypothesis investigating the effects of familismo on marital satisfaction using the higher educated sample yielded similar results as the main analyses. When familismo was added as a third step in the hierarchical regression, it too accounted for a significant change in the amount of variance explained above and beyond all other variables combined ($\Delta R^2 = .036$, $\Delta F (1, 146) = 8.156$, $p = .005$). As the level of familismo increased among the higher educated participants, marital satisfaction also increased, when all other variables were held constant. In other words, even when marianismo and perceived machismo are endorsed by the participant, familismo has a positive effect on marital satisfaction. In contrast, when conducting the same hierarchical regression analysis using the lower educated sample, the results were not significant ($\Delta R^2 = .047$, $\Delta F (1, 54) = 3.430$, $p = .069$). For participants who obtained some college education or less, familismo did not account for a significant change in the amount of variance explained in marital satisfaction above and beyond all other variables combined. As previously mentioned, because the sample size used for this analysis was very small ($n = 61$), an interpretation of these results would be inappropriate.

The findings for the second hypothesis, which examined the effects of the interaction between marianismo and perceived machismo on marital satisfaction, using the higher educated sample were very similar to the findings from the main analyses. The results for the interaction variable in the third step of the hierarchical regression analysis were not statistically significant ($\Delta R^2 = 0.003$, $\Delta F (1, 145) = .667$, $p = .416$). Specifically, the interaction variable composed of the marianismo and perceived machismo variables

did not result in a significant relationship ($\beta = 0.057, p = .416$). Similarly, the results were not significant when conducting the hierarchical regression analysis for hypothesis #2 using the lower educated sample ($\Delta R^2 = 0.006, \Delta F(1, 53) = .469, p = .496$).

The analysis for the third hypothesis, which examined the effects of the interaction between acculturation and husband's generational status on marital satisfaction, using the higher educated sample also yielded similar results to those found using the entire sample. When the interaction was added in the third step of the hierarchical regression, it did not account for a significant change in the amount of variance explained above and beyond all other variables combined ($\Delta R^2 = 0.019, \Delta F(1, 146) = 3.402, p = .067$). The interaction variable composed of the participant's level of acculturation by the husband's generational status variable was not significant ($\beta = -0.156, p = .067$). Similarly, the results were not significant when conducting the hierarchical regression analysis for hypothesis #3 using the lower educated sample ($\Delta R^2 = 0.007, \Delta F(1, 54) = .454, p = .503$).

While these additional analyses were exploratory in nature and not intended to formulate any conclusions, they may help inform future research. Level of education is an important factor to consider when examining culture and changing values among ethnic minority populations.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

Review of Findings

This study examined how Latino cultural values and acculturation affect marital satisfaction among women of Mexican origin in the United States. Women who self-identified as being of Mexican origin, were currently married to a man of Mexican origin, and were at least 18 years of age were qualified to participate in the study. A total of 214 women who met the inclusion criteria were included in the analysis. A majority of the sample in the study was highly educated; hence, the results are reflective of well-educated, Mexican-origin women rather than Mexican-origin women in general.

The primary objective of the present study was to examine the relationship between marital satisfaction and cultural variables often ascribed to the Latino culture (familismo, marianismo, and machismo) among women of Mexican origin. Specifically, it was theorized that participants who endorsed greater levels of familismo would report higher levels of marital satisfaction. It was also hypothesized that participants with corresponding levels of marianismo and perceived machismo, as well as corresponding levels of participant acculturation level and generational status of their husband, would also report greater levels of marital satisfaction. Correlational analyses were employed to examine the interrelationships among the variables included in the study. Hierarchical regression analyses were then conducted to examine the three main hypotheses with marital satisfaction as the criterion variable. A review of the key findings is provided below.

Familismo

Initial correlational analyses revealed no statistically significant relationship between marital satisfaction and familismo among women of Mexican origin. One possible explanation for this unanticipated result is that other important variables may have been suppressing the effects of familismo on marital satisfaction. Further analysis was conducted to determine other factors potentially affecting this relationship. Specifically, hierarchical regression analyses were employed to determine familismo's relationship with marital satisfaction when accounting for other demographic and cultural variables. The demographic variables of family income, age, and number of children at home, as well as the cultural variables of marianismo and perceived machismo, were held constant in the hierarchical regression model. Results from this analysis provided the unique amount of variance accounted for by familismo in the prediction of marital satisfaction, after the other variables were controlled for in the model. Familismo was found to have a significant, positive, and moderate effect on marital satisfaction when holding constant the effects of these demographic and cultural variables. In other words, marital satisfaction increased as levels of familismo increased. The results suggest familismo, which includes elements such as unity and family obligation, may serve as a protective factor in marriages for women of Mexican origin. This finding is consistent with the literature stressing the protective nature of familismo in Latino marriages (Frisbie, 1986; Nogales, 1998; Santiago-Rivera et al., 2002).

The cultural value of familismo appears to provide a considerable and influential amount of social support for married women of Mexican origin, which is also consistent

with the research on perceptions of social support and marital satisfaction by Acitelli and Antonucci (1994). Acitelli and Antonucci (1994) found that perceptions of social support in marriage were more strongly related to the marital satisfaction and general well-being of wives than husbands. Although acculturation was not significantly related to any of the cultural variables in this study, including familismo, the acculturative process may help clarify the findings between familismo and marital satisfaction. Research on acculturation indicates some aspects of familismo and the family system persist and remain intact despite changing levels of acculturation (Sabogal et al., 1987; Rueschenberg & Buriel, 1989). Therefore, even with varying levels of acculturation, persistent connectedness and identification with the family contributed to higher levels of marital satisfaction among the participants in the study.

Religion may also have an important role in the results concerning familismo and marital satisfaction, as the majority (82%) of the sample identified as Catholic. The Catholic Church is an organizing principle among the Latino population and has a strong influence on marriage and family (Frevert & Miranda, 1998; Rothenberg, 1995; Santiago-Rivera et al., 2002). The Catholic religion, as a family-related value, appears to keep marriages together among couples of Mexican origin because of its emphasis on marriage as a life-long commitment. Consequently, the positive effects of familismo on marital satisfaction may have been influenced by the participants' Catholic affiliation and beliefs about the sacrament of marriage.

Other correlational analyses revealed a significant and negative correlation between familismo and participants' tolerance for divorce, providing further insight into

the relationship between familismo and marital satisfaction. As participants' tolerance for divorce increased, their endorsed levels of familismo decreased. Likewise, participants who endorsed a higher tolerance for divorce tended to endorse lower levels of marital satisfaction. The acceptability of divorce appears to contradict principles found in the value of familismo. Specifically, the value placed on family obligation and unity decreases as the tolerance for divorce increases. Viewing divorce as an acceptable solution to an ailing marriage appears to decrease the obligation to the marriage or family unit. This decreased obligation to the marriage may in turn influence how much satisfaction one has with the marriage. Once more, the acculturative process may assist in clarifying these findings. The majority of the women in the current sample were well educated and of second or third generation. Frisbie (1986) suggested higher levels of education and acculturation among people of Mexican origin are typically accompanied by the adoption of U.S. norms and beliefs, including a greater inclination toward ending marriage with divorce when problems arise. Higher levels of education among the participants may have influenced their reports of tolerance for divorce, thus lowering those participants' marital satisfaction and possibly their chances of marital stability. In sum, results from the current study suggest marriage or the family unit among Mexican origin women may be more likely to disintegrate when they view divorce as an acceptable option and place less value on the importance of family unity and obligation. Conversely, placing high value on the importance of family unity and obligation, as well as viewing divorce as an unacceptable option, appears to contribute to marital satisfaction.

Marianismo and Perceived Machismo

Correlational and regression analyses revealed that for women of Mexican origin, levels of marianismo were significantly and negatively correlated with marital satisfaction. A significant and negative correlation was also found for perceived machismo and marital satisfaction. The findings from the current study indicate that as the participants' endorsement of marianismo or perceived machismo increased, their level of marital satisfaction decreased. Thus, the cultural values of marianismo and perceived machismo appear to have a negative influence on marital satisfaction among women of Mexican origin. Traditional gender roles, such as machismo and marianismo, are generally associated with lower levels of acculturation. The negative correlations found with marital satisfaction were expected based on previous literature associating low levels of acculturation with lowered marital functioning (Vega et al., 1988). Although perceived machismo was statistically and significantly related to marital satisfaction, it had the least meaningful relationship with marital satisfaction of the three cultural variables included in this study, with a small effect size. On the other hand, regression analyses revealed that marianismo had the most important relationship with marital satisfaction, with a medium effect size. This was further supported when examining marital satisfaction and levels of perceived conflict with marianismo. Correlational analyses supported the expectation that marital satisfaction would be significantly and negatively correlated with the level of perceived conflict with marianismo, as measured by scores on the Conflict Subscale of the LVS-R. Specifically, women of Mexican origin who endorsed facets of marianismo and reported that this has

caused conflicts in their lives also reported lower levels of marital satisfaction. These results suggest that marianismo, which includes elements of subjugation and selflessness, hinders marital satisfaction among women of Mexican origin. This finding is consistent with previous studies linking marianismo and traditional female gender roles with lower levels of psychological well-being among women of Mexican origin (Marano, 2000; Saenz et al., 1989). Marital satisfaction, a construct often associated with greater levels of psychological well-being, can be impacted negatively by marianismo. For example, women who are self-sacrificing, self-less, or who believe they are expected to endure suffering and abuse from others, will likely experience lower marital satisfaction than women who do not subscribe to these elements of marianismo. Furthermore, results from the current study suggest women who engage in these self-sacrificing and submissive attitudes and also experience conflict in their lives due to these attitudes tend to experience lower levels of marital satisfaction.

To examine the effects of marianismo and perceived machismo combined on marital satisfaction, hierarchical regression analyses were utilized. The prediction that the interactions between corresponding (a sense of shared cultural values) or dissimilar levels of marianismo and perceived machismo would be significantly related to marital satisfaction was not supported. One potential explanation for this result may be related to the lack of variability in level of education among the participants. The data were skewed, as a majority of the women in the study were very well educated, which could have led to skewed endorsement of marianismo and perceived machismo. This restriction in range may have limited the potential for finding a significant relationship with marital

satisfaction. Another possible explanation for these results is that perceived machismo may not have been truly reflective of the participant's husband's endorsement of machismo. Specifically, this may be a construct that reflects the participant's self-deception or tendency toward social desirability rather than their husband's true behaviors or attitudes. This explanation corresponds with the suggestions of O'Rourke and Cappeliez (2005) and Vega (1990) who propose that social desirability and self-deception may be potential risks when investigating marital satisfaction with populations of Mexican origin. Women of Mexican origin who subscribe to marianismo may accept their husbands' dark behaviors or ignore them altogether, thus protecting the image of their husband and the relationship. A third possible explanation for these results may involve issues of multicollinearity. Correlational analyses revealed marianismo and perceived machismo were significantly and moderately correlated. The correlation between these two predictors, if high enough, may have produced redundant information. These two gender role values mirror each other in numerous ways. When examining and comparing the instruments used to measure each construct, complimentary facets are revealed. Both tap into male superiority and female inferiority. Marianismo and machismo are inextricably intertwined but entirely opposed, which may contradict any presupposed relationship to marital satisfaction.

Acculturation

Familismo, marianismo, and perceived machismo all contributed significantly to the variance in marital satisfaction among women of Mexican origin, whereas acculturation and husband generational status did not. Correlational analyses revealed no

statistically significant relationships between marital satisfaction and participant acculturation level or husband generational status. Although previous literature suggests that acculturation plays a key role in the changes in marital roles and marital satisfaction among Mexican-origin couples, in this study the participants' level of acculturation had no statistically significant effect on their marital satisfaction. However, correlational analyses did show that participant levels of acculturation were correlated with husband generational status. As previously stated, generational status was used as a proxy for the husband's level of acculturation in this study. Participant acculturation level and husband generational status were found to be significantly and positively correlated, suggesting that participants who were more acculturated tended to be married to men who were also more acculturated. Likewise, less acculturated participants tended to have less acculturated husbands.

Hierarchical regression analyses were utilized to examine the effects of the interaction between participant acculturation level and husband generational status on marital satisfaction. The prediction that the interactions between corresponding or dissimilar levels of participant acculturation and husband generational status would be significantly related to marital satisfaction was not supported. These results may be explained by the lack of variability in the sample. The data were skewed in terms of education, which could have led to skewed levels of acculturation. The limited range in levels of acculturation and education among the participants may have restricted the potential for finding significant results. Another possible explanation might be that generational status was not an accurate predictor of level of acculturation among the

participants' husbands. Descriptive analyses revealed that the participants' husbands tended to be well educated, which may imply greater levels of acculturation based on the literature linking acculturation and education (Frisbie, 1986; Rothenberg, 1995). Higher levels of education are typically accompanied by more acculturated attitudes, including more familiarity with mainstream culture and adherence to mainstream values, norms, and standards.

While not a central research question, this study was also interested in examining the relationships between acculturation and each of the cultural variables, familismo, marianismo, and perceived machismo. Research literature substantiates that, for Latinos, as acculturation increases, some Latino cultural values tend to decrease (Cuellar et al., 1995). However, correlational analyses revealed no statistically significant relationships between acculturation and any of the cultural values examined in this study. Perhaps this is because the instruments used for this study all tap into unrelated elements and do not overlap with one another. Acculturation and the cultural variables as conceptualized in the study may measure different underlying constructs. Moreover, the instrument used to measure acculturation in this study emphasized language use primarily, which may have been too simplistic in assessing the complexity of the acculturation process. Other acculturation scales use a more multidimensional approach, such as the ARSMA-II (Cuellar et al., 1995) which measures cultural orientation toward Mexican and Anglo cultures independently. Nonetheless, the current study employed the SAS to measure acculturation based on its conciseness and high internal reliability.

Clinical Implications

The results from this study are consistent with a direct influence of culture on marital satisfaction among women of Mexican origin. It is difficult to infer the value and role of the acculturative process in marital satisfaction as it is highly complex and influenced by many variables. Examining other factors of acculturation, such as cultural values, that accompany acculturation is essential for grasping and appreciating the complexity of this process. The key contribution of this study has been the unique consideration of the relationship between Latino cultural values and marital satisfaction in the experience of women of Mexican origin, particularly women who are well educated. Results of regression analyses on marital satisfaction revealed that the cultural value of familismo has a positive influence on marital satisfaction, while marianismo and perceived machismo appear to have a negative influence. Machismo and marianismo are cultural values that may pose special risks for Latinos, especially when considering marriage.

Individuals undergoing the adaptive process of acculturation experience a range of sociocultural changes. Gender roles may change, while the family structure as a whole may undergo transformation. Many women of Mexican origin struggle with losing aspects of their Mexican culture and their identity as Mexicans, particularly as levels of acculturation and education increase. Many are able to attain biculturalism, functioning in two cultures. Nevertheless, the cultural values of familismo, marianismo, and machismo continue to affect women of Mexican origin in many ways as they attempt to fit into the mainstream of American life. These three Latino cultural values all reinforce the role of

women as the ultimate caregiver and the principle of honor through sacrifice. Women of Mexican origin who adhere to these traditional values may make the decision to sacrifice their own personal and educational goals in order to carry out their marriage goals, which may then create resentment over time and lead to marital dissatisfaction. Likewise, by women pursuing their educational and career goals, the marriage may end up suffering as well due to conflicts between perceptions of appropriate gender role behavior.

Acculturation and higher levels of education may bring about more adaptive, mainstream characteristics to marriages of Mexican-origin, such as egalitarian marital roles, but some elements of the traditional Mexican culture may remain which may complicate marital functioning and possibly reduce marital satisfaction. Acculturation is accompanied by a great deal of stress in terms of changing marital and gender roles for the couple (Casas & Ortiz, 1985).

In light of the results from this study, specific aspects of Mexican culture that might promote or detract from marital satisfaction should be considered more thoroughly. Specifically, examining how these cultural factors interconnect, while considering other important demographic characteristics such as educational levels has important implications. Furthermore, understanding how these aspects of culture influence marital satisfaction will help guide research and clinical practice. There is a great need for marriage counselors and other mental health professionals to gain additional insight regarding family-centered values and the traditional sex role concepts of *marianismo* and *machismo* that may continue to be reinforced within Latino families. For example, when working with less acculturated couples, the clinician may expect the roles of husband and

wife to be more clearly demarcated. Perhaps culturally defined prescriptions of masculinity may be contributing to the husband's restricted emotional expression or maintenance of pride or stoicism. Likewise, the wife may be self-defined by cultural prescriptions of sacrifice and submissiveness. Conversely, more acculturated couples may be less likely to follow traditional cultural scripts, thus encouraging opportunities for emotional expression during a conflict (Flores et al., 2004). Understanding of empirically supported facets of cultural value systems and marital satisfaction may provide suggestions to clinicians about how to work with Mexican origin couples. It is critical to conduct research and apply what has been learned to the development of services and the delivery of help with this growing population. For example, Santiago-Rivera et al. (2002) stress that mental health professionals should consider familismo "and its many dimensions as strengths within families" (p. 43). Exploring culture and identifying how culture influences couples of Mexican origin is critical for understanding their marital dynamics and mental health needs.

The present study extended and supported the work of previous research suggesting familismo is a positive aspect of Mexican culture. Specifically, familismo appears to be a factor contributing to marital satisfaction among women of Mexican origin. Results from the current study demonstrated that as levels of familismo increased, marital satisfaction also increased. Familismo is not a unique trait of Latino or Mexican culture, but it is considered an important, core value among this population. Individuals of Mexican origin typically have highly resilient family ties and high commitment to the family unit. Aspects of this cultural value appear to remain present among Latinos in the

U.S. today despite varying levels of acculturation. Familismo can be recognized by the existence of a large family size, the presence of extended households, the great value placed on family unity and shared aims, and the extensive level of interaction between the family and kin networks (Segura & Pierce, 1993). Results from the current study suggest such elements of familismo can help improve levels of marital satisfaction among women of Mexican origin. Even though the levels of education among the sample were skewed, with a majority of the participants being highly educated, familismo remained a positive factor associated with marital satisfaction. Familismo was also associated with less tolerance for divorce, which would improve chances of couples staying together. An important avenue for clinicians working with couples of Mexican origin would then be to explore the endorsement of familismo and to find ways of cultivating this cultural value. If fostering familismo among couples of Mexican origin helps protect marriages, this value could also be explored among other ethnic groups as part of marital counseling. Proximity of extended family, valuing familial honor, and regularly engaging in activities with family members may serve as ways of helping couples stay together.

Given that marianismo had the strongest relationship with marital satisfaction, this cultural variable deserves the greatest attention in terms of clinical and literary importance. Addressing the potential negative impact of marianismo on marital satisfaction among women of Mexican origin becomes an important point of intervention when working with this growing population. Teaching assertiveness skills and utilizing methods of empowerment with women of Mexican origin may help lead to more egalitarian roles within the marriage. Egalitarian marital relationships have been linked to

greater marital satisfaction and lower levels of depression among women of Mexican origin in previous research (Saenz et al., 1989). In light of the continued presence of familismo as a core value among this population, one possible opportunity for this type of intervention would be through the community. Interventions with Latinos may be more effective at a community level because they can provide an individual with a sense of belonging and connection with others. A community intervention, such as educational programs through churches or schools, can create opportunities for the involvement of spouses and other family members. A community program would facilitate changes within an entire community rather than just the individual or couple experiencing difficulties. Interventions aimed at both spouses are essential, particularly when differences in levels of acculturation are present. Additionally, it is important to consider the effects of machismo on marital satisfaction, as this cultural value is inextricably intertwined with marianismo. Good communication and understanding between spouses often contributes to marital stability. However, strong pride, or *orgullo*, among Latino males may make it difficult for them to express their emotional difficulties, thus potentially lowering marital satisfaction for both spouses. Interventions with the husband may involve appreciation and validation of the positive traits of machismo, such as bravery, responsibility, and protection of his wife and children, as well as providing education surrounding assertive communication skills and issues of domestic violence.

Cultural sensitivity is essential when working with Latinos as it implies an understanding of an individual's beliefs, customs, social values, and the language in which these are expressed. Results from this study will inform mental health

professionals working with women or couples of Mexican origin to better understand cultural issues affecting their marital relationships. Additionally, mental health professionals will be better equipped to design treatment interventions that are culturally sensitive and that assist in forming effective therapeutic or treatment relationships with the Mexican-origin woman and her spouse/family. Understanding the Latino culture can provide insight into a client's perspective and assist in determining factors influencing treatment. Additionally, culture can provide information about a client's available resources, whether they are internal (i.e., faith/spirituality) or external (i.e., family, religious community).

Limitations of the Study

There were several limitations in the current study. One limitation is that the sample does not contain much diversity in terms of educational levels, which decreases the generalizability of the results to the larger population. This sample tended to be well educated with higher levels of income. The participants were primarily college graduates (38.8%) or had their master's or doctoral degrees (32.7%), whereas 4.7% of the sample had only finished high school. This lack of diversity creates a restriction of range, which implies the correlations in this study may be reduced. Furthermore, research indicates divorce rates are substantially higher in couples who have not completed high school (60%) compared to couples who have obtained college degrees (36%) (Rogge, Cobb, Story, Johnson, Lawrence, Rothman, & Bradbury, 2006). Accordingly, levels of marital satisfaction would vary greatly along different educational levels. In the current study,

insufficient diversity of participant education level may have restricted the range of levels of marital satisfaction.

A second limitation is that all of the constructs in the study were assessed by self-report questionnaires through online administration. Although online administration provided a great amount of anonymity and may have prevented possible social desirability issues, self-report measures are subject to biases and might have hindered the potential for finding significant effects. Self-report measures may not have provided entirely accurate assessments of individual levels of acculturation, familismo, marianismo, perceived machismo, or marital satisfaction. Using self-report measures can create common method variance problems, which may have influenced results and is likely to lead to higher correlations (Gottman & Notarius, 2002; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). Additionally, common method variance might present multicollinearity issues among the measures. With regard to social desirability issues, Vega (1990) states that individuals of Mexican origin tend to lean toward socially desirable answers. Participants in the current study may have underreported particular beliefs as a self-protective mechanism or may have aggrandized their marital relationships (O'Rourke & Cappeliez, 2005). In spite of the reliance on self-report measures, the findings from this study have important implications for clinical practice with women of Mexican origin as previously stated.

Another limitation of this study was the utilization of only the responses of female participants, rather than those of both spouses. For example, drawing solely on the participant's report of her husband's endorsement of machismo, rather than collecting

data from the husband, may have yielded biased responses. Perceived machismo may not have been reflective of the participant's husband's actual endorsement of machismo, and may have made it more difficult to detect significance. Collecting data from both spouses could have provided further insight into the marital dynamics of couples of Mexican origin. However, based on the presented literature concerning marital satisfaction among women of Mexican origin, it was important for this study to capture the internal experiences and attitudes of women in their marriage.

Finally, a fourth limitation concerns two of the instruments used in the study. The familismo scale used in this study (Familism Scale by Lugo Steidel & Contreras, 2003) was originally normed on adults of predominantly Puerto Rican descent, which did not match the population of interest for the current study. Nonetheless, this familismo scale more accurately captures the construct of familismo as it was operationalized for this study, as compared with other scales such as the Familismo Subscale of the MACC-SF (Cuellar et al., 1995). The familismo scale used in this study measures all important aspects of familismo, including familial interconnectedness, familial honor, and subjugation of self for the family. Most importantly, it measures the dimensions of loyalty and obligation to the family, which likely play an important role in the tolerance for divorce. Lugo Steidel and Contreras (2003) also reported the usefulness of their familismo scale with lower levels of acculturation, which this study was intending to examine. The other instrument used in this study with a possible limitation was the Machismo Subscale of the MACC-SF (Cuellar et al., 1995). This scale tends to measure the negative aspects of machismo (male superiority, strength, and dominance), neglecting

the positive characteristics of machismo (protector of family, honor, courage). It would have been important to find a scale measuring both positive and negative aspects of machismo, as machismo can also refer to a husband's commitment to his family and spouse. This positive perspective on machismo would imply potentially positive effects on the marital relationship, thus possibly changing the results of the current study.

Conclusion and Directions for Future Research

The goal of this study was to explore more fully the dynamics occurring between acculturation and marital satisfaction among women of Mexican origin by investigating the influence of specific Latino cultural values on marital satisfaction. A large percentage of the sample in the study was highly educated; hence, the results contribute to the sparse current literature on well-educated women of Mexican origin. Results of the study supported the premise that the endorsement of familismo is related to greater levels of marital satisfaction among women of Mexican origin, while the traditional gender role values of marianismo and perceived machismo are associated with lower marital satisfaction. These findings suggest that the motivation to maintain close family unity might help prevent divorce among women of Mexican origin. The cultivation of familismo within marriages appears to be a promising area of intervention that merits greater attention by mental health professionals working with individuals, couples, and families of Mexican origin.

Acculturation is an essential variable for understanding the Latino and Mexican-origin population and culture. Acculturation is the process of culture change that an individual goes through as a result of contact with a new culture. While there is evidence

linking acculturation to the psychological constructs of marital satisfaction and distress, no previous studies have specifically examined the effects of the shifting factors (i.e., cultural values) of the acculturative process on marital satisfaction among Mexican-origin women in the U.S. The current study contributes to the literature on Mexican-origin marital functioning by taking into account several cultural values commonly associated with the Latino culture, including familismo, marianismo, and machismo. Although these cultural variables are in a state of flux and constantly changing due to acculturation, they continue to be present among the Latino population in and outside of the U.S. today.

The findings and limitations of the current study offer a number of suggestions for future research on Latinas, particularly women of Mexican origin. An area in need of further research attention is the types of clinical interventions used with this population. The number of people of Mexican origin in the U.S. is steadily increasing, making it especially important to understand their mental health needs and make an effort to provide more culturally appropriate services. Addressing the psychosocial needs of women who adhere to familismo, marianismo, or traditional feminine norms should be part of empirically based clinical interventions. Research should focus on finding ways of employing these cultural values in therapy or assessment to promote psychological well-being regardless of acculturation level.

Second, future studies should examine marital satisfaction using more diverse samples. Specifically, future research should include women of Mexican origin with diverse levels of education, socioeconomic status, age, and length of marriage. Marital satisfaction and stability vary across levels of education and socioeconomic status

(Bramlett & Mosher, 2002; Frisbie, 1986). According to the literature on marriage, marital satisfaction also tends to vary greatly across generations and certain stages of marriage are more vulnerable than others (Gottman, 1999; Markides & Hoppe, 1985; Markides et al., 1999). Future research should also include husbands. Obtaining data from both spouses would provide more insight into their marital functioning and satisfaction by comparing their endorsement of cultural values and their individual perceptions of the marriage. Moreover, this study could be replicated using interethnic couples to further explore the effects of acculturation, ethnicity, and race when examining the relationship among cultural and gender role values and marital satisfaction.

Third, the current study did not explore differences between first and second marriages. This is important because of the substantially higher divorce rate for second marriages (10% greater than for first marriages). The divorce statistics in the U.S. are grimmer for second marriages, and this could have different implications for the predictor variables in this study. Future research could investigate the effects of these cultural values on first versus second marriages within the Mexican-origin population to determine how they contribute positively or negatively to marital satisfaction. Similarly, the endorsement and effects of these cultural variables could be investigated with regard to differences in length of marriage. Based on Gottman's (1999) suggestions regarding a couple's vulnerability for divorce, comparisons could be made among Mexican-origin couples who have been married 7 years or less, 7 to 16 years, 16 to 24 years, and 25 years or greater. Important differences may exist during these stages or periods of marriage and may provide possible points of intervention.

Fourth, future research might include the exploration of factors associated with acculturative stress. Many issues affect the processes of immigration and acculturation, such as changing gender and family roles, social discrimination, and developing bicultural relationships and families. The immigration experience can often be accompanied by a great deal of psychological distress caused by finding or changing employment, financial difficulties, and language barriers (Bean et al., 2001), which may have a negative impact on marital and family relationships. Several researchers have noticed the importance of discriminating outcomes of these immigrant elements. Future studies involving women of Mexican origin need to specifically address these issues affecting the process of immigration and assimilation to mainstream American life.

Finally, a longitudinal study may provide more accurate measurements of marital satisfaction among couples of Mexican origin. Future research could expand the assessment of marital satisfaction to include methods of measurement other than self-report questionnaires, given potential social desirability and common method variance problems. Gottman and Notarius (2002) suggest marital research should involve multiple methods, including observational measures. Quasi-experimental design studies could provide additional insight. Specifically, marital satisfaction could be measured across time at different stages of the marital relationship, and comparisons could be made between couples or individuals who endorse higher levels of familismo, marianismo, or machismo and couples or individuals who endorse lower levels of these cultural values.

Appendix A

Recruitment E-mail

Greetings,

My name is Karina Garcia-Bravo, and I am a doctoral student working on my dissertation in the Counseling Psychology Program at The University of Texas at Austin.

I invite you to participate in a research study examining the influence of Latino cultural values on the marital satisfaction of women of Mexican origin. **To participate in this study you must be: a woman of Mexican origin/heritage, currently married to a man of Mexican origin/heritage (for at least six months), and be 18 years of age or older.** If you are not eligible to participate, please consider forwarding this e-mail to friends, relatives, colleagues, or other potential participants or listservs.

Participation in this study is completely confidential and your responses will be anonymous. You may withdraw from the survey at any point. If you choose to participate in this web-based study, it will take about 20 to 30 minutes of your time. As a participant in this study, you are eligible to win one of three gift certificates in the amount of \$25 for Chili's, Starbucks, or Target store.

If you are interested in participating in this study, please click on the following link which will provide more information and the survey:

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.asp?u=741162975406>

This study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRB # 2006-09-0025). If you have questions about this study, please feel free to contact the principal investigator at karinagb@mail.utexas.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact Lisa Leiden, Ph.D., Chair of The University of Texas at Austin Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, (512) 471-8871 or e-mail: orsc@uts.cc.utexas.edu.

Thank you very much in advance for your help!

Sincerely,

Lizbeth Karina Garcia-Bravo, M.A.
Principal Investigator/Doctoral Candidate
Counseling Psychology Program
Department of Educational Psychology
The University of Texas at Austin
Advisors: Ricardo Ainslie, Ph.D. & Michele Guzman, Ph.D.

Appendix B

Informed Consent to Participate in Research

Dear Participant:

You're invited to participate in a research study examining the influence of Latino cultural values on the marital satisfaction of women of Mexican origin. Your participation in this study will be greatly appreciated and is completely confidential. Participation will entail completing six surveys and a demographic questionnaire inquiring about your age, place of birth, ethnicity, and education. There are no right or wrong answers to the surveys, so please be as honest as possible in responding to the individual items. The results of this study are intended to help add to the research in psychology of women of Mexican origin, a group that is often overlooked in studies.

Your responses will be anonymous and there are no known risks for participation in this study, other than a slight risk of some stress in thinking about past experiences. If you volunteer to be in the study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. Completion of the questionnaires should take no more than 20-30 minutes. As a participant in this study, you will be eligible to win one of three gift certificates in the amount of \$25 to Chili's, Starbucks, or Target Store when you send a separate e-mail to the principal investigator at karinagb@mail.utexas.edu.

This dissertation project has received IRB approval (#2006-09-0025) and is being conducted under the guidance of Dr. Ricardo Ainslie (E-mail: rico.ainslie@mail.utexas.edu) and Dr. Michele Guzman (E-mail: michele.guzman@mail.utexas.edu) in the Department of Educational Psychology at The University of Texas at Austin. If you have any questions you may contact the principal investigator, Lizbeth Karina Garcia-Bravo at karinagb@mail.utexas.edu.

Please read the following statements. By clicking on the "Next" button below, you indicate that you have read and understood each of these statements and that you agree to participate in this study.

- I am at least 18 years of age.
- I am of Mexican origin/heritage.
- I am married to a man of Mexican origin/heritage.
- I understand that there is no obligation for me to participate.
- I understand that my decision to participate, to not participate, or to discontinue participation will in no way affect, either positively or negatively, my relationship with The University of Texas at Austin.
- I understand that I have the right to contact Lizbeth Karina Garcia-Bravo at karinagb@mail.utexas.edu or The University of Texas at Austin Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects at (512) 471-8871 concerning this research.

Appendix C

Demographic Information

Date_____

All the information provided here will remain confidential.

I. Please answer these questions as they pertain to **YOU**:

1. Date of Birth: _____

2. Age: _____

3. Gender: ____Female ____Male

4. Number of years living in the United States: _____

5. Race/Ethnicity:

____Latino/Hispanic

(Please specify (e.g., Mexican, Cuban, etc.)_____

____European American/White

____African-American/Black

____Asian American/Asian

____Other (Please specify):_____

6. Place of Birth:

____ Mexico

____ United States

____ Other (Please specify): _____

7. Where were your parents born?

Mother?_____

Father?_____

8. Where were your grandparents born?

Your mother's mother?_____

Your mother's father?_____

Your father's mother? _____

Your father's father? _____

9. Religious Affiliation: ____Catholic ____Protestant ____Judaism ____Buddhist
____Hindu ____Muslim ____None ____Other (Please specify): _____

10. Your highest level of education completed (Check only one):

____No formal education

____Elementary School (K-5)

____Middle School (6-8)

____High School (9-12)

____Some College

____College Degree

____Masters/Doctoral Degree

____Other (Please specify): _____

11. Current Marital Status (Check only one):

____Single

____Married

____Divorced

____Separated

____Living together (but not legally married)

____Widowed

12. Date of current marriage: _____

13. Number of years in current marriage: _____

14. Number of children: _____

Ages of children: _____

Number of children living at home: _____

15. Are you currently employed? ____Yes ____No

If so, what is your occupation? _____

16. On average, how much income does your family make **each year**?

___ Less than \$10,000

___ \$10,000-19,999

___ \$20,000-29,999

___ \$30,000-39,999

___ \$40,000-49,999

___ \$50,000-69,999

___ \$70,000 or more

II. Please answer these questions as they pertain to *YOUR HUSBAND/SPOUSE*:

17. Age of Spouse: _____

18. Spouse's Date of Birth: _____

19. Spouse's Race/Ethnicity:

___ Latino/Hispanic

(Please specify (e.g., Mexican, Cuban, etc.) _____

___ European American/White

___ African-American/Black

___ Asian American/Asian

___ Other (Please specify): _____

20. Your Spouse's Place of Birth:

___ Mexico

___ United States

___ Other (Please specify): _____

21. Where were HIS parents born?

Mother? _____

Father? _____

22. Where were HIS grandparents born?

HIS mother's mother? _____

HIS mother's father? _____

HIS father's mother? _____

HIS father's father? _____

23. Your Spouse's highest level of education completed (Check only one):

___ No formal education

___ Elementary School (K-5)

___ Middle School (6-8)

___ High School (9-12)

___ Some College

___ College Degree

___ Masters/Doctoral Degree

___ Other (Please specify): _____

24. Number of years Spouse living in the United States: _____

25. Does your Spouse currently live with you: ___ Yes ___ No

Appendix D

Short Acculturation Scale (SAS)

1	2	3	4	5
Only Spanish	More Spanish than English	Both Equally	More English than Spanish	Only English

Please circle the most appropriate response:

1. In general, what language(s) do you read and speak?	1	2	3	4	5
2. What was the language(s) you used as a child?	1	2	3	4	5
3. What language(s) do you usually speak at home?	1	2	3	4	5
4. In which language(s) do you usually think?	1	2	3	4	5
5. What language(s) do you usually speak with your friends?	1	2	3	4	5
6. In what language(s) are the T.V. programs you usually watch?	1	2	3	4	5
7. In what language(s) are the radio programs you usually listen to?	1	2	3	4	5
8. In general, what language(s) are the movies, TV and radio programs you <i>prefer</i> to watch and listen to?	1	2	3	4	5

1	2	3	4	5
All Latinos/ Hispanics	More Latinos than Americans	About Half & Half	More Americans than Latinos	All Americans

Please circle the most appropriate response:

- | | | | | | |
|--|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| 9. Your close friends are: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. You prefer going to social gatherings/parties at which the people are: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11. The persons you visit or who visit you are: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 12. If you could choose your children's friends, you want them to be: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Appendix E

Familism Scale

Please read each statement carefully. Using the 1-10 scale, choose the number that best describes how you feel. Please be open and honest in your responding.

**Strongly
Disagree**

**Strongly
Agree**

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

1. Children should always help their parents with the support of younger brothers and sisters, for example, help them with homework, help the parents take care of the children, and so forth.
2. The family should control the behavior of children younger than 18.
3. A person should cherish the time spent with his or her relatives.
4. A person should live near his or her parents and spend time with them on a regular basis.
5. A person should always support members of the extended family, for example, aunts, uncles, and in-laws, if they are in need even if it is a big sacrifice.
6. A person should rely on his or her family if the need arises.
7. A person should feel ashamed if something he or she does dishonors the family name.
8. Children should help out around the house without expecting an allowance.
9. Parents and grandparents should be treated with great respect regardless of their differences in views.
10. A person should often do activities with his or her immediate and extended families, for example, eat meals, play games, or go somewhere together.
11. Aging parents should live with their relatives.
12. A person should always be expected to defend his/her family's honor no matter what the cost.

13. Children younger than 18 should give almost all their earnings to their parents.
14. Children should live with their parents until they get married.
15. Children should obey their parents without question even if they believe they are wrong.
16. A person should help his or her elderly parents in times of need, for example, helping financially or sharing a house.
17. A person should be a good person for the sake of his or her family.
18. A person should respect his or her older brothers and sisters regardless of their differences in views.

Note: The original Familism Scale was mistakenly altered for this study by using a True/False scale rather than the intended 10-point Likert type scale for each of the items. Participants completed this questionnaire using the following instructions:

Please read each statement carefully and choose “**True**” if you believe the statement to be **True** or **mostly True**, and “**False**” if you believe the statement to be **False** or **mostly False**.

Appendix F

Machismo Scale (MACC-SF)

Please read each statement carefully and decide whether it is something *your Husband/Spouse believes or would say*. Please circle “**T**” if your husband/spouse believes the statement to be **True** or **mostly True**, and “**F**” if your husband/spouse believes the statement to be **False** or **mostly False**.

1. *My husband believes or would say:*

A man should not marry a woman who is taller than he is. T F

2. *My husband believes or would say:*

It is the mother’s special responsibility to provide her children with proper religious training. T F

3. *My husband believes or would say:*

Boys should not be allowed to play with dolls, and other girls’ toys. T F

4. *My husband believes or would say:*

Parents should maintain stricter control over their daughters than their sons. T F

5. *My husband believes or would say:*

There are some jobs that women simply should not have. T F

6. *My husband believes or would say:*

It is more important for a woman to learn how to take care of the house and the family than it is for her to get a college education. T F

7. *My husband believes or would say:*

A wife should never contradict her husband in public. T F

8. *My husband believes or would say:*

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| Men are more intelligent than women. | T | F |
| 9. <i>My husband believes or would say:</i> | | |
| No matter what people say, women really like dominant men. | T | F |
| 10. <i>My husband believes or would say:</i> | | |
| Some equality in marriage is a good thing, but for the most part the father ought to have the main say so in the family. | T | F |
| 11. <i>My husband believes or would say:</i> | | |
| For the most part, it is better to be a man than a woman. | T | F |
| 12. <i>My husband believes or would say:</i> | | |
| Most women have little respect for weak men. | T | F |
| 13. <i>My husband believes or would say:</i> | | |
| I would be more comfortable with a male boss than with a female boss. | T | F |
| 14. <i>My husband believes or would say:</i> | | |
| It is important for a man to be strong. | T | F |
| 15. <i>My husband believes or would say:</i> | | |
| Girls should not be allowed to play with boys' toys such as soldiers and footballs. | T | F |
| 16. <i>My husband believes or would say:</i> | | |
| Wives should respect the man's position as head of the household. | T | F |
| 17. <i>My husband believes or would say:</i> | | |
| The father always knows what is best for the family. | T | F |

Appendix G

Latina Values Scale Revised (LVSr)

A complete copy of the Latina Values Scale Revised (LVSr; Marano, 2000; Melendez, 2004) is not included in the appendix section due to copyright restrictions.

Sample Items from the LVSr:

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Do not agree or disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

Please circle the number that best describes how you feel. Please note, that each sentence has two parts.

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. I find myself doing things for others I prefer not to do. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 1b. Has the response to this question caused problems or conflicts in your life? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| | | | | | |
| 2. I feel guilty when I ask others to do things for me. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2b. Has the response to this question caused problems or conflicts in your life? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| | | | | | |
| 3. I feel proud when others praise me for the sacrifices I have made. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3b. Has the response to this question caused problems or conflicts in your life? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| | | | | | |
| 4. I often take on responsibilities having to do with my family. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4b. Has the response to this question caused problems or conflicts in your life? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| | | | | | |
| 5. I often find myself doing things that will make my family happy even when I know it's not what I want to do. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5b. Has the response to this question caused problems or conflicts in your life? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Appendix H

Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS)

Answer each question by choosing the one that best identifies how you feel about your marriage/relationship.

1. How well does your husband meet your needs?

1	2	3	4	5
Poorly		Average		Extremely well

2. In general, how satisfied are you with your relationship?

1	2	3	4	5
Unsatisfied		Average		Extremely satisfied

3. How good is your relationship compared to most?

1	2	3	4	5
Poor		Average		Excellent

4. How often do you wish you hadn't gotten into this relationship?

1	2	3	4	5
Never		Average		Very often

5. To what extent has your relationship met your original expectations?

1	2	3	4	5
Hardly at all		Average		Completely

6. How much do you love your husband?

1	2	3	4	5
Not much		Average		Very much

7. How many problems are there in your relationship?

1	2	3	4	5
Very few		Average		Very many

Appendix I

Supplemental Question

Please circle the response that best describes how you feel.

How acceptable is divorce to you?

1	2	3	4	5
Very Unacceptable	Somewhat Unacceptable	Neutral	Somewhat Acceptable	Very Acceptable

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